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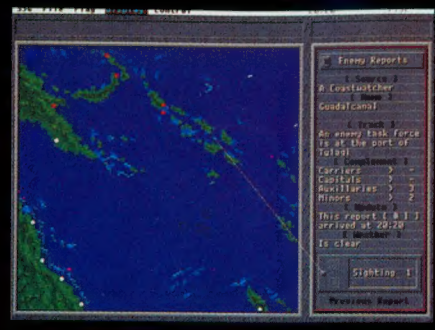

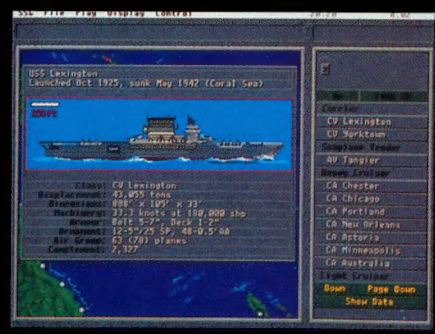

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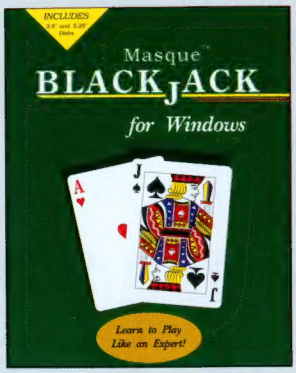

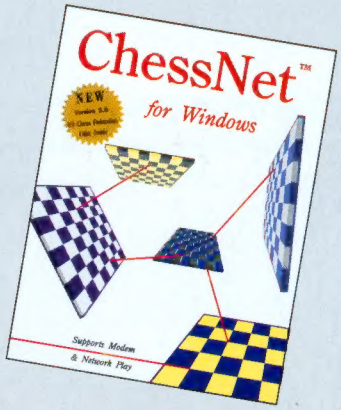

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COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS

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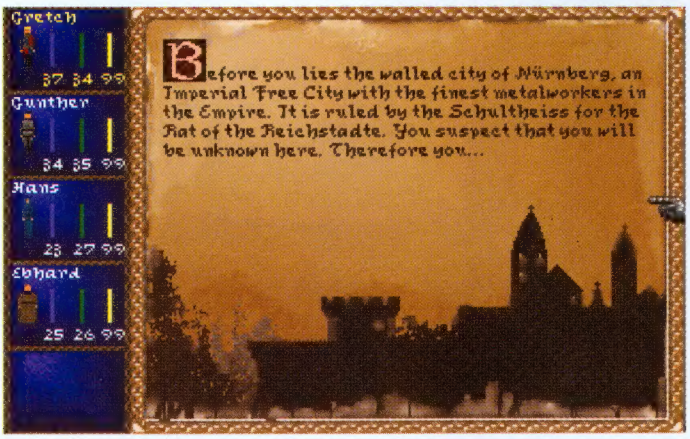
April 1992
US edition

He who plays, wins

CES SPECIAL REPORT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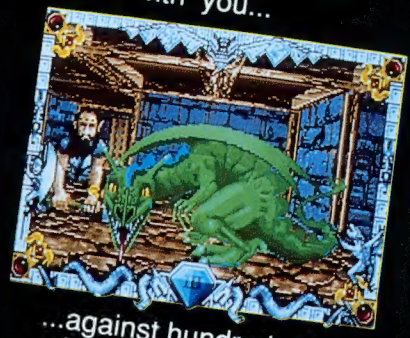

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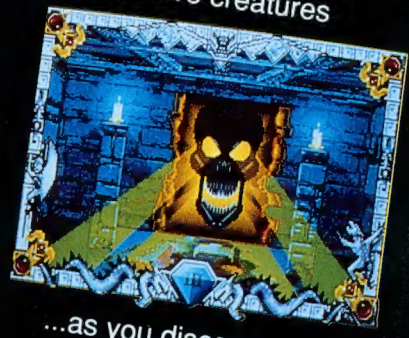

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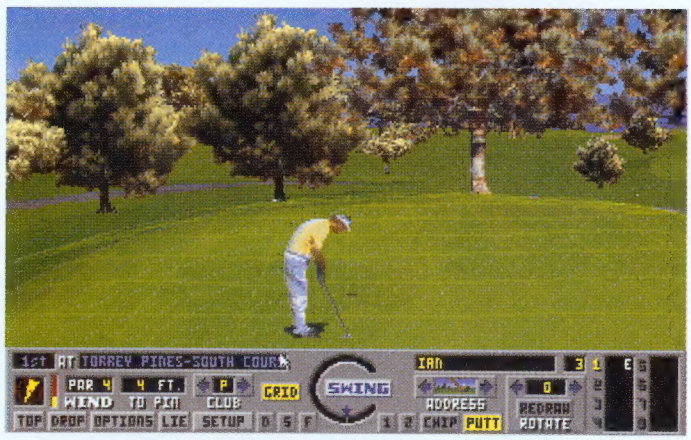

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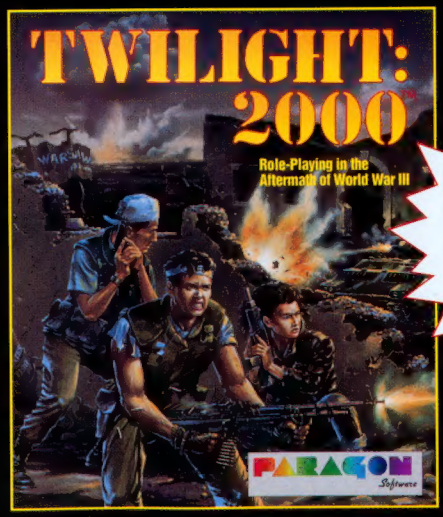

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Reader Service No. 103

The show must go on

The winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas dominates this issue with good reason. This is the most important software show of the year and it's both a duty and a pleasure to bring you a prompt and comprehensive report of the products that are likely to be entering your drive this year. Unfortunately this means that a number of regular features, and some reviews, have had to be held over until the next issue.

Going public

The summer CES in Chicago will contain at least one innovation, if it can be called thus: the general public will be allowed in for the last two days. It's hard to imagine any *one* person coming up with so boneheaded an idea, so the theory is that it must have taken a whole committee. Lest this seem a tad ungenerous to any would-be attendees reading this, a close look at the structure of the show is called for.

Unsuspecting readers might imagine that the leisure software business is big time. Visions of unrestrained opulence float though their minds: matt black designer booths serving sushi, giant monitors, roaring sound.

The reality is somewhat more modest: most companies opt for little more than a four foot desk and a 14 inch monitor. Even for the purposes of honouring appointments with humble hacks this is pathetically inadequate, so you don't have to be Old Moore to imagine the chaos that will ensue when Joe Public comes knocking.

And then there are the perps. Most readers of this magazine are, I suspect, urbane, highly educated members of the general population (and lifetime subscribers) to whom the thought of half-inching so much as a pack of matches would leave them guilt-ridden for eternity. But sadly not all members of the community are blessed with such aesthetic appreciation and monk-like reverence. The hoi polloi hoolies to whom anything not nailed down is up for grabs also have to be considered.

The software companies were not asked, and have therefore not responded to the decision to go public. Their booths will remain as tiny ever, but will now be rendered invisible by the mass of human flesh attempting to negotiate a way over and around them. So just what was the motivation in opening the flood gates?

The answer lies buried deep in the politics of American conventions and their importance to the host city. Attendances at the summer show in Chicago have been falling steadily over the years while the crowds at that citadel of vulgarity, Las Vegas, have remained steady. It was therefore decided that *something must be done* if the Chicago show was to be saved. Let no one think that altruism played any part in the decision. Cynics (they're everywhere!) will probably think that this rant is self serving. To those harbouring such impertinent thoughts I would point out that *Strategy Plus* will, in all probability, be taking a booth at the Chicago show where our staff and rent-a-floozies will welcome the opportunity to satisfy readers demands. It's just that the big picture takes precedence.

USA today

One of the advantages of being an international magazine is that we get first bite at the cherries on both continents. This means that by the time licensing agreements have been negotiated for different countries, the reviews of the game in question are not only in the can but on the page. The advantage to readers, particulary in the USA, is that this means they can often read the review *before* the game is actually released rather than having to wait the best part of a decade owing to the long lead times that are part and parcel of US publishing.

Did someone say out of sight, out of mind? No worries, for help is at hand for those readers (and staff) whose powers of recall are starting to diminish. Our US Today column will not only keep them abreast of newly acquired European games for the US market, but also remind them which issue the game was reviewed in. Likewise, UK Today will perform a similar function for games going in the opposite direction.

Exclusion zone

Despite having plenty of 'scoops' to our name readers may wonder why we never use the tag 'exclusive'. But then again, most probably couldn't care less. The reasons, however, are worth at least a brief examination. The word exclusive has been subject to such abuse, by the computer press in particular, as to be rendered almost meaningless. The biggest culprits are journalists reared on arcade games who are by now so brain dead they couldn't tell an exclusive from a telephone directory.

The games business has supposedly grown up and yet one can still see stories, based on a laptop peek of an alpha copy, written in headlines which would make a casual reader think that the writer had just discovered Martin Boorman. The fear of being tainted by acquaintance is powerful at *chez Strategy Plus* and it for this reason that the 'e' word is avoided.

Field of yen

Baseball fans are alarmed by the news that Nintendo, the video games company and attorneys at law, have put in a bid for the Seattle Mariners. But they can rest easy. I understand there is no truth in the rumour that the electronic giants plan to rename the team the 'Seattle Mario Brothers'. ❑

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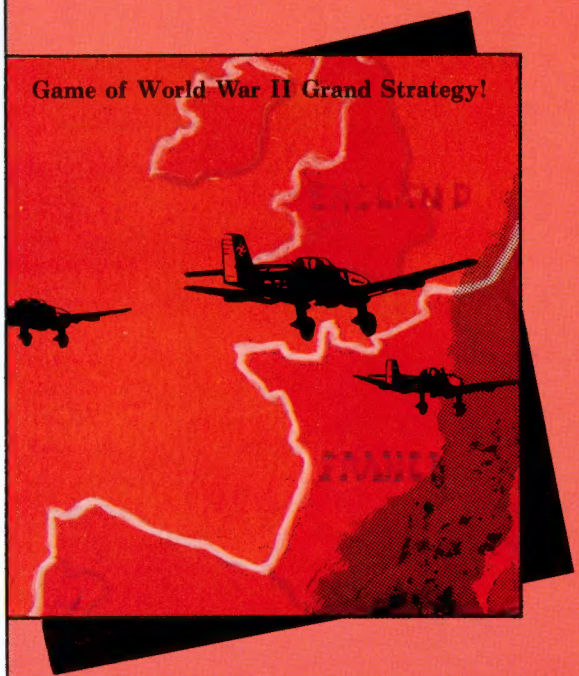

World War II, the conquest of Europe...

Out of the ashes and turmoil of post-World War II Europe an Austrian artist rose from obscurity to command the greatest military machine ever known to man. His name was Adolph Hitler. He and his band of Nazi cutthroats promised a starving German people revenge for the injustices of World War I and a Reich that would last for a thousand years.

Gaining absolute power in 1934, Hitler embarked upon the return of Germany to her previous place of prominence with massive rearmament programs. First Austria, then Czechoslovakia fell under the Nazi boot.

The west viewed the German rise to power with growing alarm, and when Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, Britain and France declared war.

The stage was set for a war of such magnitude that it could only be compared to the greatest of natural disasters.

Computer Wargaming like you've never seen it!

It's more than a game, *it is the definitive historical simulation of Europe during World War II.* All the elements: *military, economic, geographical, ideological* and *chronological* are included in the game. Until now, **Third Reich** has been a game for the truly dedicated boardgamer. Recent advances in electronics now make it possible to put all of the rich detail of the boardgame into your home computer.

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Computer Third Reich is available for $39.95. Please add $6.00 shipping and handling (Canadian orders $12.00; overseas $18.00). IBM PC/PS and compatibles version is coming soon.

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Strategy Magazine had this to say: "The point and click interface is a pleasure to use...The map graphics themselves are excellent...At first I thought this new version would be too simple for the Third Reich player and too complex for the newcomer. Six hours play changed this viewpoint."

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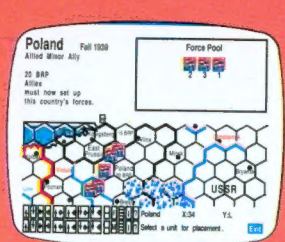


The twice yearly Consumer Electronics Show is, or should be, the most important and exciting event on the calendar of every computer games journalist. Each year there is a feeling of anticipation that this particular show is going to be the most important and influential one ever.

The reasons for this surge of excitement should be obvious: not only is the CES the place where all the new games for the year are announced, but it is also the launch pad for new hardware. A more recent attraction is that it also enables 'works in progress' to be monitored – a necessity in these days of expanding development times.

The question I often ask myself is not how many CES's the game will span, but will I still be alive when the game makes it onto the shelf. But so much for whimsy and on with the show.

MICRO

WINTER CES LAS VEGAS

The big game from the Big M this year is **Darklands**. For Microprose this represents a major attempt to diversify into markets other than the flight sims with which its name has become virtually synonymous.

Considering that the 'red peril' has disappeared and that the 'mother of all wars' turned out to be big daddy crushing an upstart brat underfoot, this would seem to be an entirely sensible move. Not that this is likely to stop former pilot Wild Bill Stealey entirely. I asked him where his F19s and F22s were going to bomb next? 'Sheffield', he replied. Please, Bill, couldn't you make that Birmingham?

But back to **Darklands**. This is Microprose's first foray into the role-playing arena and true to form, the company has come up with something that looks and plays like no other CRPG currently on the market. Take the setting: medieval Germany. *Germany?* I asked designer Arnold Hendrick the reason for this choice.

'I wanted the game to have some historical base and yet appeal to players who still wanted the feel of a fantasy game. I asked myself which was the most chaotic country in the middle ages and Germany came out tops,' he replied. 'Take a look at it, there were three popes, venal clergymen, gangsters, and Goths all battling it out.'

Darklands takes all these elements on board and then throws in a few witches and dragons for good measure. Players explore a vast, historically accurate map of Germany with a party of four adventurers created from the likes of nobles, swordsmen, mercenaries, monks, and so on. The character generation system is huge, providing for 26 attributes and skills.

The goal of the game is to achieve

Right: Sea Rogue
Below: F-15 SE III

PROSE

fame and immortality on multiple quests, many of them simultaneous. These quests are created by an 'adventure generator' and allow endless replayability. The game is text heavy compared with others of the genre, but this is easy on the eyes thanks to the beautiful artwork and subtle hues of the backdrop. The combat system is quasi real-time, that is to say it occurs in real time mode, but may be stopped while fresh orders are input.

Tentacular touch

Pencil and paper role-players may care to note that the design team of **Darklands** included Sandy Petersen, creator of **Call of Cthulhu**. Role-players are a fairly conservative lot and it will be interesting to see how they react to this one, which turns genre conventions on their head.

One of the games I'm most looking forward to this year is Dan Bunten's **Global Conquest**. Like his earlier **MULE**, **Seven Cities of Gold**, and **Command HQ**, the emphasis is on the multi-player aspect.

In **Global Conquest** four players will be able to compete over two modems. Or as Dan puts it: 'It'll be like a boardgame with four players, each starting in a corner of the board.' Computer opponents will be provided, of course, and the artificial intelligence is reputed to be an improvement over that used in **Command HQ**. The cyborg will now have a 'personality' and varying combat styles.

The objective is to discover and conquer worlds by destroying opponents command centres. The game has a modified turn structure that uses real time elements, plus there will be an option of having *different* turn structures. The beauty of the game is that worlds are randomly generated (up to four billion!) and can be viewed in two sizes – either as a whole 'board' view, or a zoom into a particular area. Players will also be able to customise the terrain with forests, mountains, native peoples, cities, etc. PC only with Adlib sound support and high-res EGA.

The most spectacular looking flight sim at the show had to be **F22: Advanced Technology Fighter**. This is the first program to be developed using Microprose's high performance 3D graphics system and really does look the biz. The finished version is a long way off (spring 1993). Another great-looking flight sim, **F-15 SEIII**, is expected in September.

Top secret game of the show was **Johnny Crash**, the latest in a series of working titles (the last one was Hairdressers in Space) for the new graphic adventure game which aims to beat Sierra at its own, er... It certainly looks and sounds great, but not much to go on as yet.

Fans of the David Puttman movie *Memphis Belle* should lap up **B-17 Flying Fortress**, a simulation of the hazardous Second World War missions over occupied Europe which was developed in the UK on the PC. Fly missions in group formation and attempt to avoid German bombers en route to knocking out strategic targets in Deutschland. Altogether there are 25 daylight missions provided, briefings and intelligence reports will be available.

Nose job

A nice touch is the option to customize the flying fortress with 'nose art'. And Microprose claims that the instrument panel will be the 'most detailed ever seen in a bomber simulation'.

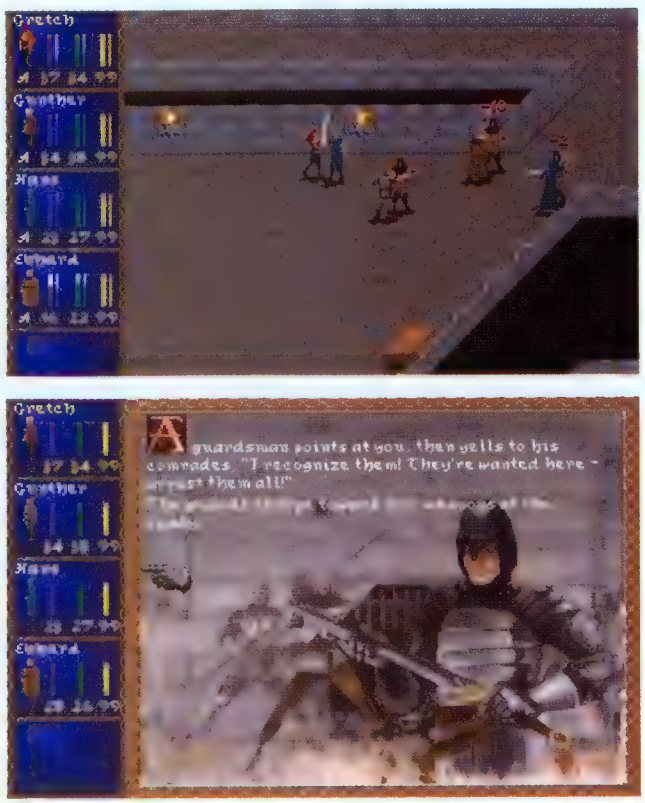
Ten crew members can be selected by studying their past missions and various skills. They can then be allocated to specific tasks such as navigating and repair work. **B-17 Flying Fortress** will be available for the PC first with the Amiga to follow.

From the strife-ridden skies to the stormy seas. **Sea Rogue** is a role-playing adventure that offers the player the part of racy fortune hunter, or stuffy underwater archaeologist. Whichever is chosen, the player will interact with the crew of six, plus seedy characters such as bank managers. When at sea the crew will be exposed to realistic dangers that include sharks, drug smugglers and mines.

The objective, of course, is to locate and plunder some of the 270 historically based sunken wrecks. Successful finds will be rewarded and enable the player to purchase high-tech equipment and a skilled crew, rather than be lumbered with the scurvy dogs he started out with. The treasure hunt culminates in a search for the Titanic and the Bismark.

Sea Rogue supports high-res EGA, Adlib and Sound Blaster sonic support. The PC version is expected in spring.

Microprose will be releasing **Task Force 1942** this summer. This game is a battleship sim that focuses on the Guadacanal campaign. No further information is available at present. ❑



Darklands: Goths a go-go in Germany

WINTER CES LAS VEGAS

PARAGON

Another company moving into the hardware stratosphere is Paragon, whose previous titles include the **Megatraveller** series. The company's major release is **Mantis**, upon which the influence of **Wing Commander** looms large.

In this special effects laden game, alien insects have almost wiped out the human race. That's the bad news. The good news is that they start with the TV newscasters. Enter the XF5700 Experimental Fighter (Mantis) which has been developed by the newly formed world government.

Digitized graphics and cinematic sequences fill out the picture as the quest to destroy alien creepy crawlies commences. A CD ROM version will be released at the end of the year which Paragon claims will use all of the 550Mb that the disk permits.

Spellbound is another game that features 'cinematic sequences' (what doesn't these days?), though it bears no relation to the Hitchcock film of the same name. This game comes from the pen of Marc Miller of GDW and **Megatraveller** fame.

Take five

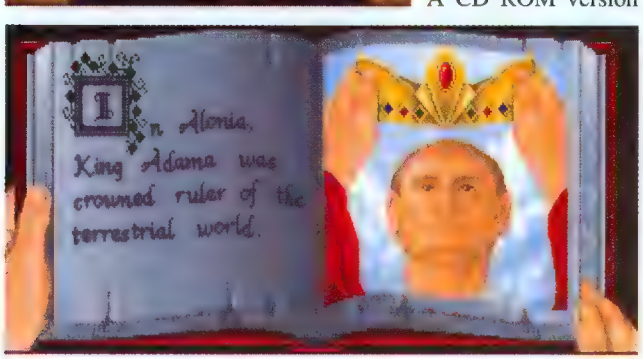
Described as a fantasy role-playing adventure and subtitled **Challenge of the Five Realms**, the program places the player in the role of a young prince who must go into 'search and destroy' mode against the evil Emperor Grinmoth to save the planet from darkness. If this sounds kinda hokey then the graphics and sound offer some consolation. Plus there's the 'spellcasting' feature which adds a strategic element to the game, and then there's Paragon's PAL system which allows characters to volunteer for tasks for which they are best suited.

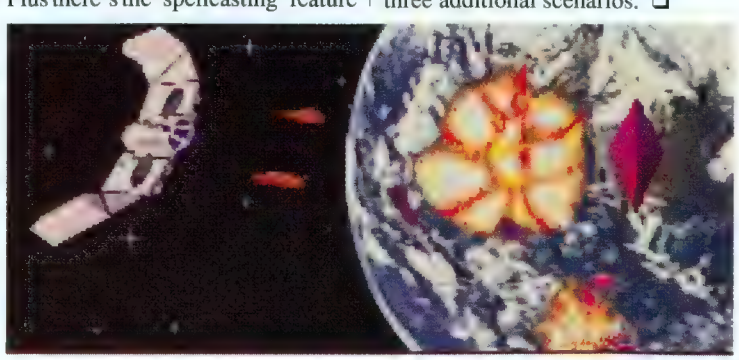
But back to **Megatraveller**. The third instalment, **The Unknown Worlds**, will appear later this year. The structure is quite different from anything seen hitherto in the series. Instead of one campaign there will be three scenarios: a rescue adventure, an ancient mystery, and a quest for revenge. Each will have its own puzzles and characters.

In addition there is a random world generator and a different plot every time the game is played. The icon driven interface has been improved; only viable options are highlighted.

Following closely on the game's release, Paragon will be releasing a follow-up supplement containing three additional scenarios. ❑

Above and below right: Mantis. Below: Spellbound.





BRAVO ROMEO DELTA

ATTENTION... THIS IS NOT A DRILL!

During a major Soviet naval exercise, 50% of the ballistic missile subs are deployed to sea and a limited nuclear strike is launched on American targets. At 3:58AM NORAD picks up the first incoming nuclear warheads, targeted for US Air Bases, and with less than 6 minutes to impact.

SS-18 Satan: The largest, most powerful ICBM ever built, the SS-18 is a two stage, liquid propelled 'heavy' missile. Available with either a single, highly accurate, high yield warhead, or 10 MIRVs (multiple independently targeted reentry vehicle), the Pentagon claims that the SS-18 was "specifically designed to attack and dstroy ICBM silos and other hard targets" in the USA.

As the Chief Target Planner at the Strategic Air Command, it is your responsibility to launch a limited second strike. The targets selected should demonstrate the resolve of your political leadership, while not escalating the conflict.

Defined by the Federal Preparedness Agency (FPA), a controlled conflict is, in part, one in which the contending powers use or threaten to use military force, including nuclear weapons on a scale restricted enough to avoid precipitating a general war.

This concept of Escalation Control is the strategic policy embodied in the Presidential Directive 59 (PD-59) which states that the U.S should be able to initiate the limited or selected use of strategic nuclear weapons, and to control the escalation process in such a way that democracy would continue to "prevail" in the post-war world.

Single Shot Kill Probability (SSP_k)
Given a warhead yield (Y) in kilotons, accuracy in meters, and target blast hardness (H) in PSI, the following equation is used:

$$SSP_k = 1-(0.5)^x$$

Where x can range from:

$$x = (1340Y^{1/3} / Accuracy)^2$$

for soft targets (0-50 PSI hardness) to

$$x = ((438Y^{1/3}/H^{1/3})/Accuracy)^2$$

for hard targets (over 1000 PSI)

More than 80 percent of Soviet ICBMs, carrying more than 95 percent of the Soviet ICBM-based warheads are ready to be launched within minutes from their day-to-day alert status. 30 to 40 percent of Soviet SSBNs are on day-to-day alert, with roughly 20 percent of Soviet SSBNs on station at any given time to launch retaliatory strikes. -- Potapov, I.N. Nauchno-tekhicheskiy progress i'flot (Voyenizdat, 1977) p. 129

(From the Bravo Romeo Delta Designer's Notes)

The implementation of PD-59 is your job. **Bravo Romeo Delta** gives you complete command of U.S. Strategic forces, including ICBMs, SLBMs, SSBNs, Bomber Bases, and provides you with all tactical warning and attack assement complements of NORAD. This is a real-time simulation, with no punches pulled.

When you've perfected the US strategy you can switch sides and become the Commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces for the U.S.S.R. Within the same scenario, you must prepare to respond to the American counterstrike, while adhering to the Soviet nuclear targeting strategy, and shifting the CoF (Corelation of Forces) in favor if the U.S.S.R.

Bravo Romeo Delta has a suggested retail price of $59.95.
Amiga version available soon.
MS-DOS version available Spring.

Free Spirit Software

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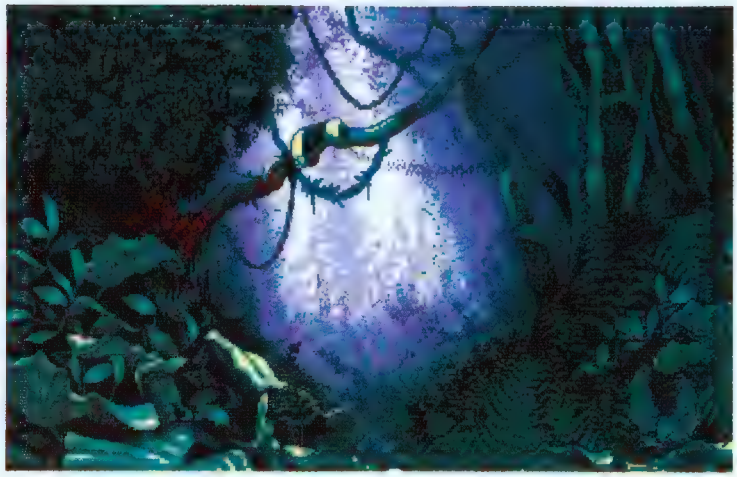
Reader Service No. 35



LEGEND

WINTER CES LAS VEGAS

Legend is widely regarded as the spiritual home for destitute Infocom fans. Its **Spellcasting** series and **Timequest** showed that in a 3D world of interactive digitized cinematic experiences, words still mean something.

Both founder Bob Bates and co-writer Michael Lindner are storytellers at heart, but as the saying goes, the moving finger writes and having writ moves on. And thus it was that Legend Entertainment moved into the giddy world of 256-colour VGA (shock!), and digitized sound effects (horror!).

This is the world of **Gateway**, the sci fi adventure based on the 1978 book of Frederick Pohl, the first in a Hugo and Nebula award winning series. Heresy, or what? Well, not quite. As Bob made clear this new game will still be powered by the **Spellcasting** engine, it's just the look of the game that will undergo surgery.

Certainly the graphics are very different and vastly superior. The new screens make interacting with characters and operating the high-tech equipment much easier. It all *looks* that much more user friendly. The plot involves an intergalactic prospector who gambles on a ride in an alien starship, the destination of which was programmed 5 000 000 years ago by the Heechee. At journey's end there may lie a motherlode of technology that will guarantee a place in the sun, but the biggest sleep of all is the likeliest outcome.

Encounters include an intergalactic daiquiri at the Blue Hell Bar, new worlds of dream-invading bacteria (ugh!), and a cyberspace showdown with the enemy.

Gateway will be the first in a planned series based on the Pohl books. The strong storyline and challenging adventure should ensure that Legend retains its existing market while picking up a whole new bunch of fans.

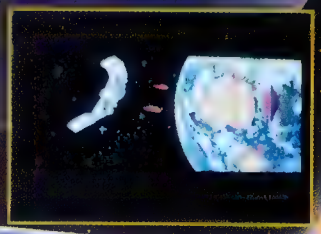
The game will support Sound Blaster and Adlib sound boards, SVGA and high-res EGA on the PC. It'll be available in April. ❑

Above and below: Gateway

XF5700
MANTIS
EXPERIMENTAL FIGHTER™

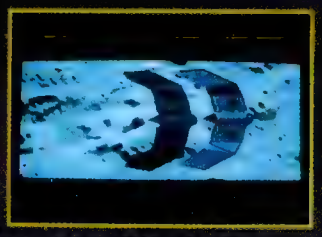
The Crisis

Giant insect-like creatures are threatening the survival of our planet. First they nuked us from space. Now they're reproducing inside living humans.



Your Ship

Our only hope is the XF 5700 Experimental Space Fighter (codename: MANTIS). Our first world government, Federation of Earth (F.O.E.) developed it to fight the enemy. Now they're looking for someone to fly it — in combat.



A Fighter Pilot's Dream

It's up to you to avenge Earth. You'll fly the MANTIS, a high-tech wonder armed with futuristic firepower.

The Enemy

The Sirians aren't your run-of-the-mill insect aliens. Individually, they're powerless pests, but together they form a powerful collective group mind capable of advanced technology that can obliterate the human race.

State of the Art 3-D

Fly the MANTIS in thrilling, realistic 3-D experiences. Brilliant graphics, cinematic digitized movements, chilling sound effects, and a suspenseful musical score add to the adventure.

Actual screens may vary.

Your Mission

Saving the planet from destruction is no small chore. The Sirians are returning to finish what they began. Are you up to the challenge?

PARAGON™ Software

Marketed by MicroProse Software, Inc.
180 Lakefront Drive · Hunt Valley, MD 21030

For Amiga/IBM-PC/Tandy availabilities, call Paragon 1991 Paragon Software and 9am-5pm EST, weekdays.

Coming Soon: MegaTraveller 3 and Spellbound: Challenge of the Five Realms

Reader Service No. 103

WINTER CES LAS VEGAS

SSI

The next release from SSI will be **Buck Rogers II: The Matrix Cubed**. The first game received a mixed reception, with some players being turned off by the emphasis on combat. This sequel is not about to change that.

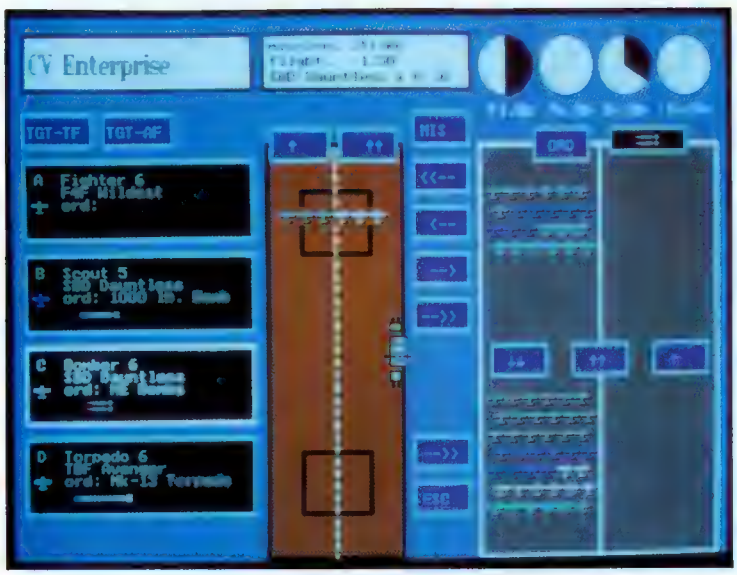
The plot concerns the depletion of Earth's natural resources. The matrix is a machine rumoured to be capable of transferring mundane substances into precious energy. Good ol' Buck is naturally keen to get his mitts on this, but there are other, less squeaky clean forces at work. Characters from the first game **Countdown to Doomsday** may be transferred over. The game should be available now for the PC and Amiga.

Another sequel is **Treasures of the Savage Frontier**, the **AD&D** follow up to **Gateway of the Savage Frontier**. As in the **Buck Rogers** game, characters may be transferred from the previous game, or a new party may be created. New characters begin at the 5th level and advance as high as the 11th level, depending on class.

For the first time in a 'gold box' game, characters can build relationships and get romantically involved (oo-er) with non-player characters. Movement and combat are now affected by weather adding a new dimension to the game. PC version first with the Amiga version (1Mb) to follow later in the year.

Moving away from sequels for just a moment, **Tales of Magic: Prophecy of the Shadow** is actually a new game and also represents SSI's first foray into the world of digitized graphics. In fact it is the first of a series of single character story-based fantasy role-playing games (phew!).

The action takes place in the land of Auric where the wise one, Larkin,



Far left: Treasures of the Savage Frontier. Above: Carrier Strike

has just been assassinated. Just before he signs off he sends the player on a quest to find the Magic Council in order to let them know that the fabled prophecy is beginning to unfold.

The interface is point-and-click icon based – combine this with 256-colour VGA graphics and sound board support and a pretty formidable game presents itself. An Amiga version will follow shortly after that for the PC.

On the wargames side there is something of a battle going on to see which title will be released first. One of the combatants is: **Carrier Strike: South Pacific 1942–1944.** Although this latest game from Gary Grigsby follows on from **Second Front and Western Front**, there are considerable differences between this and its predecessors. For one thing it will be the first game in the series to support sound cards. Second, the program contains a random generator that can provide an infinite number of carrier battles.

The game works on both a tactical and operational level, and features carrier task combat with that links several battles together to form a grand campaign. Three historical battles (Coral Sea, Eastern Solomons and Santa Cruz), plus one hypothetical combat (Torakina) are included in what looks to be Gary Grigsby's most outstanding achievement to date. **Carrier Strike: South Pacific 1942-1944** will be available for the PC only, hard disk mandatory.

The other wargame title from SSI is **Conflict: Korea**. This is designed by Norm Koger and follows on from **Red Lightning** and **Conflict: Middle East**. As the name suggests the game is based on the 1950s conflict in Korea, but will also feature a modern day hypothetical scenario which depicts a conflict between North and South Korea and limited forces from the US.

The essence of the game, of course, is its historical nature. In June of 1950, United States military planners believed that the army of the Republic of Korea was the best military force of its size in Asia. Washington was concerned that any additional arms given to the South Koreans would prompt them to invade the North.

US intelligence agencies were in full agreement that a North Korean invasion of the South was unlikely. Naturally enough North Korea invaded the South on June 25, 1950. Within a month it had overrun three quarters of South Korea, and the fighting was to last three more years.

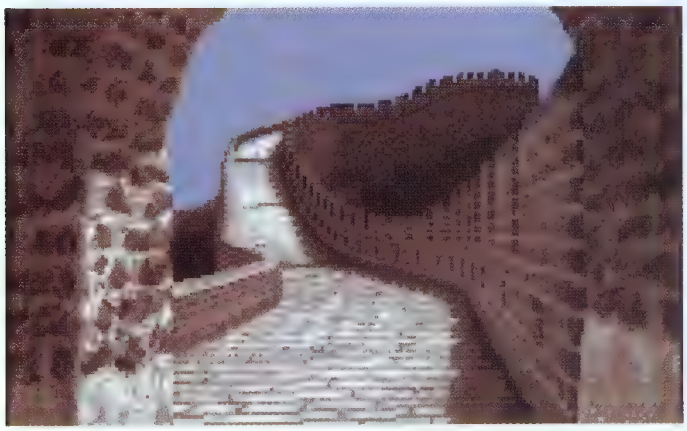
Conflict: Korea simulates the opening phase of the Korean War. The scenarios in the game include: The Dragon Wakes, June 1950–51 campaign; Operation Chromite, September 1950 to June 1951, and Cold Steel, November 1950 to June 1951.

Conflict Korea: Korea will be available for the IBM and Amiga, which is good news for Amiga owners because SSI has announced that there will be no Amiga version of **Western Front** or any of the future wargames in that series.

Looking ahead, one of the most intriguing releases planned from SSI is a conversion of the TSR boardgame **Line in the Sand**. This was favourably reviewed in issue 8 back in the days when we covered boardgames as well as software. The combat is fairly minimal in this game as the emphasis is on diplomacy and strategic planning. It will be interesting to see just how SSI replicates the infamous diplomacy phase where players put their messages in a 'diplomatic pouch'.

Another sign of SSI gearing up for 1990s is its **Bismark** game. This will be a 3D animated simulation in the mode of Microprose's **Silent Service II**, but set in the North Atlantic. No firm details on this yet, but as soon as screen shots appear you'll see them here. ❑

Below: Conflict Korea



KONAMI

Konami is trying to make a big splash in the software market – after making its reputation selling arcade games.

Among the new releases are a couple of UK games already reviewed in this magazine – you read it here first! – specifically **The Killing Cloud** (issue 9), **Riders of Rohan** (issue 11), **Utopia** (issue 14), and probably **Mega lo Mania** (issue 13), although the latter game has become ensnared in the Maxwell fiasco.

Ghastly beyond belief... Plan 9 from Outer Space (left and above)

Another game over which the spectre of Cap'n Bob looms large is **Rollerbabes**, programmed by Acme Interactive and was scheduled to be released by Konami in the US and Mirrorsoft (RIP) in the UK. The destination of that particular title is currently unknown.

Konami is expanding its UK office, and heading the new releases will be **Bill Elliot's Nascar Challenge** for the PC closely followed by **Reach for the Skies** (previewed issue 13).

The company's new range for 1992, although all bought in, has

WINTER

CES

LAS VEGAS

some excellent looking games: **Champions,** based on the pencil and paper role-playing game, has a unique character generation system and great graphics. The fact that the designer of the original game, Steve Peterson, is also responsible for the software version should give the project some credibility.

According to Steve, **Champions** is 'based around stories, rather than wandering around on a map' and also has a 'unique' character generation system. In addition to supporting add-on disks the game engine in **Champions** will also be used to create new role-playing games. **Mission Impossible** is based on the TV series of the same and will be reviewed next issue.

Action game

Konami's gridiron game looks pretty hot too. As the name suggests, **NFL Football** is a licensed product and as such will feature real teams and players. This is primarily an action game, though there is a coach only mode. Twenty-eight teams are included with the game, each containing a squad of 45 players. Attributes include intelligence, speed, endurance, throwing accuracy, and kicking distance. Real NFL stats can be imported into the game to recreated actual NFL line-ups.

There's also a play editor for budding coaches, this consists of a split screen; the upper half depicts a chalkboard, while the lower half contains a spiral notebook. Drafts and trades occur at the end of each season. The viewpoint is a rear 3/4 playing field. A VCR instant replay is provided, as is a comprehensive end of game summary and stats report. Digitized voices (and crunches) add to the fun. Despite the plentiful options **NFL Football** is simple to play and should appeal to the experienced player as well as the rookie.

'May be the most miserable spectacle ever made' – *TV Guide.*

'Staggeringly inept horror adventure' – *HBO Guide to the Movies.*

'Mesmerisingly awful' – Leonard Matin.

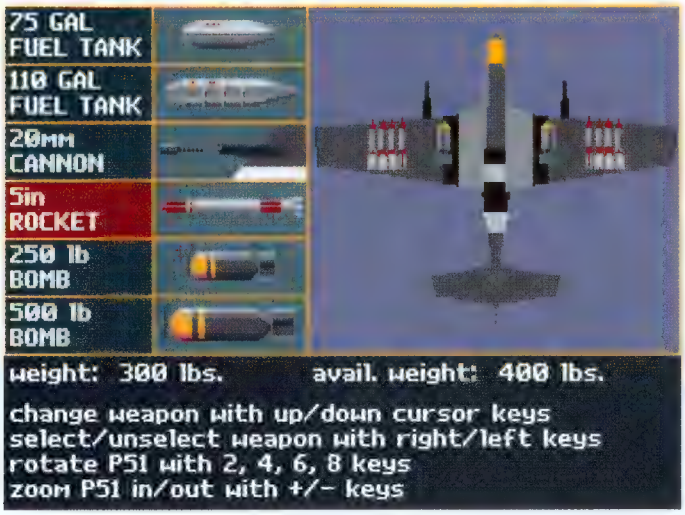
And those were the good reviews! For once the critics were undivided. *Plan 9 From Outer Space* was one of the worst films of all time. Congratulations (of sorts) then, to Gremlin Graphics for acquiring one of the least sought after film licences this century. The Sheffield-based software house will be producing the computer version which then be released in the US by Konami.

For those who've forgotten or tried to forget, *Plan 9* was the film where the star, Bela Lugosi, expired during the making and was replaced by the hairdresser on set. In case anyone was still awake director Edward D Wood had the 'double' appear in a black cape which was held over his face. Unfortunately this ploy was rendered somewhat redundant by the fact that the hapless sweeny was almost a foot taller than the deceased.

Then there were the special effects. Flying saucers were literally that. 'Explosions' were effected by setting light to paper plates and throwing them at the cameraman. The software version, wisely perhaps, eschews copying the film's narrative and concentrates instead on the actual making.

Players travel to various locations to collect movie reels and then return to the editing room to splice the footage together. Over 50 digitized sequences from the film will be included in the adventure which will be appearing shortly on a screen near you. ❑

Hero game (left): Champions makes it on to computer


75 GAL FUEL TANK
110 GAL FUEL TANK
20mm CANNON
5in ROCKET
250 lb BOMB
500 lb BOMB
weight: 300 lbs.
avail. weight: 400 lbs.
change weapon with up/down cursor keys
select/unselect weapon with right/left keys
rotate P51 with 2, 4, 6, 8 keys
zoom P51 in/out with +/- keys

ELECTRONIC ARTS

WINTER CES LAS VEGAS

Electronic Arts (EA) is undoubtedly one of the giants of the industry, posting record profits for the past couple of years. Much of this can be attributed to jumping on the console bandwagon at just the right time.

The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes: The Case of the Serrated Scalpel represents EA's first move into the graphic adventure market – Sierra territory. Recognizing that simply using existing Holmes mysteries would be a somewhat pointless exercise, EA came up with the notion of the 'Lost Files'. The adventures in this series will therefore be all new, but written in the style of Conan Doyle. The player takes the role of the idiosyncratic Holmes and will be assisted by the ever obedient Watson.

The first case involves a murdered actress who Scotland Yard believes was done in by Jack the Ripper. But doubts remain – enter the tweedy sleuth and coke freak.

There are 25 characters to interact with including the infamous Moriarty. The graphics, despite the 256 colour VGA, are somewhat muted. Perhaps this is to capture the 'feel' of Victorian London, an aim the classical soundtrack also attempts to achieve. The interface is mouse driven and very smooth, as is the animation.

Altogether there are 50 locations, including London Zoo, Covent Garden, but no Ealing alas. Clues abound, but watch out for red herrings (and the fish and chips). When stuck, then Sherlock's smarter brother, Mycroft, can be called upon to lend a hand at the cost of some points. Expect to see this, the first in a planned series, on the PC next month.

John Madden was a classic American Football star and **John Madden Football** was a classic game – one of the first to include a sophisticated playmaking facility. In the light of recent developments, however, it has started to show its age, and so along comes **John Madden Football II**. It should be pointed out that this is a completely different game from the console product of the same name.

In this new game the inimitable Madden gives a play-by-play analysis on every down as well as providing advice on what plays to run in crucial situations. Ignore this at your peril. As he said in a recent interview, he was not a 'natural', he had to 'think about his game' much more than players who simply went out and 'did it'. The Oakland Raiders were the chief beneficiary of these

Home front (above): Heroes of the 357th. Holmes front (below, centre): The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes: The Case of the Serrated Scalpel

thoughts, not least in the classic games against the Steelers.

But so much for sporting memories and back to the game which features, among other things, a one-on-one match-up which can be accessed on a play-by-play basis. Another improvement is the icon menu screen which makes for a much improved interface.

Twenty-eight teams are included plus the All Madden Team. **John Madden Football II** will be available for the PC shortly.

In the basket

If John Madden is the definitive football hero, then Michael Jordan is basketball's equivalent. **Michael Jordan Flight** is the working title of the EA's latest basketball sim, which takes up where **Jordan vs Bird** left off. Several changes have taken place in the years since that game appeared, not least the advent of 256-colour VGA. EA has also developed a new technology it calls Video-Sim that facilitates full motion video animation. There is also digitized footage of the shooting star.

The context in which all this is placed is a 3-on-3, 1-on-1, or three point shootouts. All of Jordan's classic moves are included – the slam, reverse lay-up, and the pull-up jumper. Each player in the game is based on a real basketball player. At the end of each game a sports announcer takes over; an interview with Jordan and highlights from the game are replayed. All the usual VCR facilities of flight sims are present here.

In addition there's also a 'video-edit' lab where users can create highlight films. If that's not enough then there are several plays designed by the maestro himself, plus a playcalling strategy. Watch out for this one on the PC in summer.

EA has recently signed a distribution agreement with UK software house Millennium which means that **Global Effect** will be appearing under their auspices. This is a big game in the mould of **Civilization**, indeed the goal of the game is to create an environment fit for man and beast to live in. Unlike the Sid Meier classic, **Global Effect** can be played by two players plus a computer player.

Starting off with a small population, minimal power and land, the player(s) must explore continents, find and exploit resources, and develop technology. All of this will hopefully lead to something approximating civilization. If it doesn't, you die. The game area is large – 64 000 locations no less. Each of these can hold a separate land type. The essence of the game is to achieve an environmental balance while heeding what opponents are doing.

Sim City

The interface is **Sim City** style: point, click, and build. For those fond of capsule descriptions: **Global Effect** is a strategic version of **Sim Earth**.

The locale of **Heroes of the 357th** is the war-torn skies of Europe, where the player may fly with the likes of Leonard 'Kit' Carson and the other Second World War flying legends known collectively as the 'Yoxford Boys'. Pitted against the might of the Luftwaffe is the P-51 Mustang.

There are seven mission types available including strafing runs, bomber escorts, VI intercepts, and dive bombing.

The campaign game is the tour of duty wherein the player's strike rate is saved, the object being to acquire 'ace' status. **Heroes of the 357th** will be available soon for the PC. Tally ho! ❑

ACCOLADE

WINTER CES LAS VEGAS

It looks as though **Links** is going to get some serious competition from the new **Jack Nicklaus Golf and Course Design Signature Edition**. This is a completely new version of the game in stunning 256-colour VGA. The terrain and sprites are extremely realistic, but just as importantly the screen redraws are fairly fast.

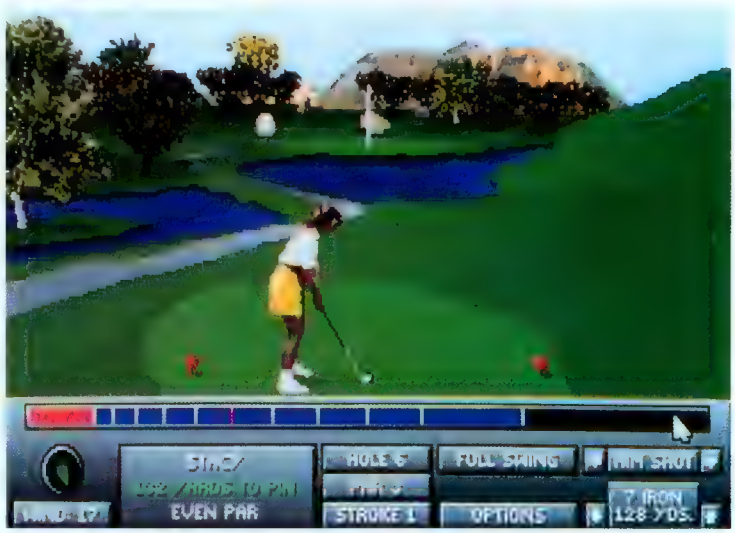
The courses that come with the game are the water-intensive English Turn Golf Club in New Orleans, and the rugged Sherwood Country Club in California. PGA stats are compiled for each player and updated after every round. In addition there is a new Tournament mode (up to five rounds) in which players can compete against fellow humans or computer golfers.

Another new feature is the option to customize computer players exactly as you want them. The power bar which was, hitherto, vertical, has now been repositioned horizontally to allow a wider viewing area. The digitized horizons and trees plus bitmapped fairways, greens, and bunkers are a vast improvement on the EGA version.

Splashing out

There's also digitized sound effects – splashes when the ball goes for a swim, and a different sound for every club used, plus there are crowd responses throughout the game. The golfers too, have been digitized. Animated flagsticks and realistic ball bounces all add to the sense of 'being there'.

To get an exact reading of the distance between ball and hole, a 'tape measure' feature has been added. And then, of course, there is the course designer. This is pretty much the same 'as was' except for the enhanced graphics. Because of the change in graphic modes, courses designed using the old program will not be compatible with the signature version. The power bar, although still a three click job, has been modified somewhat. I found it a tad difficult to get to grips with, but then I'm not called Captain Hook for nothing.



Signing on: Jack(ie) Nicklaus joins the VGA graphics club

'The problem with **Star Control** was that there was no ship designer, so we've now included one in **Star Control II**,' I was told. Is that the lamest excuse for sequel, or what? Fortunately there are other elements present that just prevent it being labelled 'upgrade'. These elements include 3D rotating planets, and fractal generated surfaces. A new feature in the program is the Super Melee Game, where up to 28 ships can slug it out in space. **Star Control II: The Ur-Quan Masters** will be available for the PC later this year.

Probably Accolade's best know series is the **Test Drive** collection. Following in the slipstream comes **Grand Prix Unlimited**, which is the product of a marketing tie-in with *Road and Track Magazine*. The game was designed by the creator of **Test Drive III**, Tom Loughry.

Sixteen cars hurtle round the tarmac including Ferrari, McClaren, and Williams. Although the Monaco track I careered around on was still in the construction stage, I feel it will really have to go some way to beat Geoff Crammond's game for Microprose.

Its best bet of getting pole position is the course architect. This lets the user create brand new circuits or modify existing ones, à la **Jack Nicklaus**. Signs, people, and buildings are included in a vast clip art library.

Sam Nelson, the producer of the game, says: 'The beauty of the course architect is that you can change the route anytime you want. It can be as simple as moving a single road barrier, or as complex as configuring a brand new course tile by tile.'

Watch out for this on the grid around April. ❑

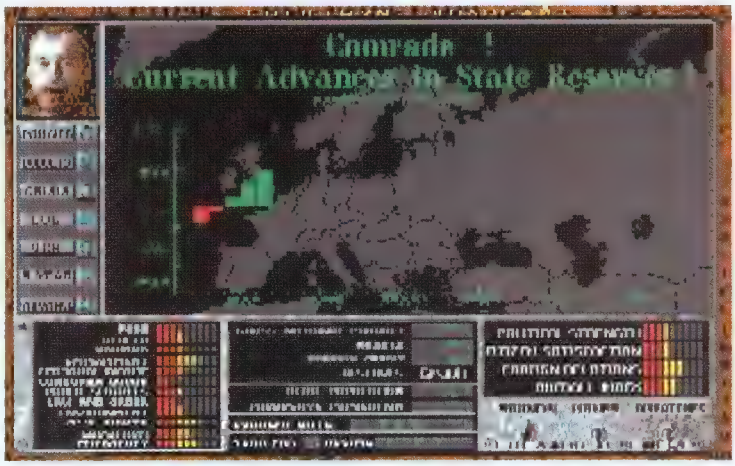
SPECTRUM HOLOBYTE

There are those people who take the view that this year's least timely release (other than Virgin's **KGB**) will be Spectrum Holobyte's **Crisis in the Kremlin**. In terms of topicality this is true, but an irrelevant consideration in the big picture – one only has to look at historical wargames to grasp the flaccidity of that argument. Who gives a hoot if the Soviet Union, as depicted in the game, no longer exists? The important question surely, should be: 'Is the game any good?'. At this point it is too early to provide a definitive answer to this enquiry, but all the signs augur well.

The game was programmed by Soviet emigre Vladimir Baculyn, so it is nothing if not credible. 'My grandfather, who raised me, was a top adviser to the then president, Nikita Kruschev,' said Baculyn. 'He often told me stories of his experiences in the Kremlin.' Baculyn went on to point out that what happened to Gorbachev last year also happened to Kruschev in 1964. 'Kruschev went on holiday in the Crimea and a few days later, Brezhnev was in power.'

Baculyn incorporated this 'silent coup' into the game long before the Gorbachev debacle of last year. 'When it happened,' he said, 'all I could think of was that they stole my scenario. Naturally I was glad the coup failed and Gorbachev returned to power.'

Crisis in the Kremlin is a geopolitical simulation that puts the player in the role of Soviet president. The country can be governed in a Stalinist manner, or the more liberal policies of Gorby may be adopted. Radical reformist Boris Yeltsin also makes an appearance. The objective is to stay in power for 30 years without having to pay a terminal visit to the 'clinic'. Players are kept up to date by memos and faxes, and, to add to the realism, the game incorporates digitized video newscasts.



The graphics will be 256-colour VGA and there will be extensive sound throughout the game.

Joining **Falcon 3.0** in the Electronic Battlefield System (EBS) later this year will be **Avenger A10**. The entire EBS is also being developed for Cyberstudio in conjunction with British company W Industries. This is be the first consumer-based virtual reality system. The unit, which will be known as Virtuality, will transport players into a computer-generated 3D world with stereoscopic vision, full colour graphics, quadraphonic sound and real-time 360 degree action. To enter this extraordinary world, players will need special headsets and gloves. A computer opponent will also be provided.

In addition to EBS, several original titles are being planned for this virtual world. Initially the Virtuality systems are expected to replace coin-ops in the malls. The playing costs will be about $1 a minute with each game taking about three minutes. Eventually the unit will be produced for home use – and you thought you were set for life after buying that 486!

Puzzle fans will be pleased to hear that **Super Tetris for Windows 3.0** is now available from Spectrum Holobyte and will be reviewed in our next issue. ❑

Siege (left, below and bottom): boiling oil for the rabble

MINDCRAFT

WINTER CES LAS VEGAS

Man the battlements! Raise the drawbridge! Lock up your trousers, er, daughters, for a **Siege** will soon be under way. This is the title of the forthcoming game from Mindcraft.

Siege is a real-time strategic simulation in which the player commands the forces assaulting (or defending) medieval castles. Troops include peasants, knights, elves, wizards, trolls and goblins, each with their own distinct personality. For players who prefer a dose of reality, then the French, English, and the Celts are thrown in too.

Several scenarios are included as well as a campaign game, plus there's a design-your-own-onslaught editor. Scenarios feature several different castle and terrain plans, while a complete campaign calls for total conquest of anything that moves as well as things that don't. Weapons include battering rams, catapults, and boiling oil to pour on the filthy rabble outside the gates.

Despite the presence of a scenario editor, expansion sets will be forthcoming Yes, I know this all sounds a bit like a game that begins with 'C', but it's very different. Honest.

Mindcraft's next release, however, will be **The Magic Candle II: The Four and Forty**. In looks this is very much a traditional fantasy role-playing, but closer inspection reveals a somewhat different beast. The biggest departure from genre conventions is the absence of a character generator.

Instead, the parties are predefined; each have their own talents and characteristics. The trick is not to raise their 'levels', but to choose characters that will perform tasks with maximum efficiency.

Altogether there are thirty one characters just waiting to *par-ty*. Also, characters that have been saved in other game in the series such as **The Magic Candle: Volume I** and **The Keys to Maramom**, or both.

The big difference between this game and previous candles are the graphics and sound - say hallo to 256-colour VGA plus excellent sound, and wave goodbye to CGA crud and beeping beeps.

The manual runs to 74 perfect bound pages, and a full colour map is also included in the package. A mouse interface is provided, but the game moves along just dandy from the keyboard.

The Magic Candle II: The Four and Forty will be available for the PC very shortly. ❑

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Sir-Tech's Wizardry 7: Crusaders of the Dark Savant (left and below): UK deal imminent

END GAMES

Brian Walker rounds up the strays at the Consumer Electronics Show

Amazing Access has managed to squash **Links** onto the Amiga. That's the good news. The bad news is that you'll need a hard drive to run it. Access has been making some stunning improvements to **Links**, but we're not at liberty to disclose these at present. Watch out for news in a future issue.

Sir-Tech's **Wizardry 7: Crusaders of the Dark Savant** looks totally fab and should be ready for release in March.

UK readers may care to note that a UK deal for the game looks imminent, so apart from wider availability there should also be a drop in price on this side of the pond.

Sir-Tech also had an interesting role-playing cum strategy game, the working title of which was **Ambush**. Although no relation to the Avalon Hill boardgame of the same name, it encourages identification with character, but in a wargame context. It's amazing how few games have attempted to do this (**Twilight 2000** springs to mind), perhaps because there are so few squad level wargames. At the moment it is not even certain that this game will be released. If it isn't, then lets hope some developer realizes there's a gap to be exploited here.

No reputable magazine publishes unsubstantiated gossip does it? Of course not, and it's absolutely dreadful how the talk of the show was that Microprose's UK distribution agreement with Spectrum Holobyte was just a prelude to the Big M taking it over lock, stock, and Falcon.

Bow out

Sierra On-Line after a torrent of new releases has gone all quiet, though the company did say that there will be a new Laura Bow mystery before the end of the year.

The firm's main focus is going to be on educational software (yawn). But let's not overlook its subsidiary label Dynamix, whose **Aces of the Pacific** was previewed in issue 15.

More details as to what this simulation will include are now available both on this game and its forerunner **Red Baron**. A series of expansion disks are planned for both products, the first of which is likely to be the **Red Baron Mission Builder,** which will also include more aces.

But back to the Pacific. Features of this new flight sim include over 30 detailed aircraft, air-to-air and air-to-ground combat. There will also be carrier landings replete with special effects. The expansion disks are: **RAF in the Pacific** – that's right, handlebar moustaches take on the sushi

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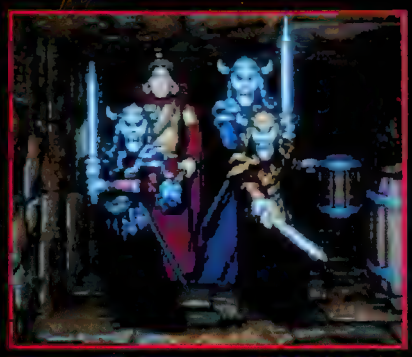

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squadrons. This will be followed by **WWII:1946**. This is a 'what if' scenario which postulates what would have happened if Truman *hadn't* dropped the big one. New fighters now join the battle in this quest towards an unknown destiny.

The big surprise from Sierra was the announcement that a multi-player version of **Red Baron** will be posted in the Sierra Network (TSN) very shortly. This will allow both solo and team battles. Hook up those modems now! **Red Baron** is also available on the Amiga though Dynamix recommends a 14MHz machine to run it – double the speed of the bog standard A500.

Three-Sixty's **V For Victory: Battle for Utah Beach** is now out on the Mac and looks quite beautiful. A full review will appear in our next issue. The Utah Beach scenario is the first battleset in a planned series, the second of which will be an Eastern Front game. Jim Dunnigan is still soldiering on with **Victory at Sea** while **Patriot** is also on the back burner. Three-Sixty's message to readers is: 'Be patient.'

Bond is back

Harpoon users should note that the next battleset will be Westpac, and this will be followed in June by special battleset that will contain new scenarios for existing battlesets. Larry Bond will design one for each scenario while the rest will be selected from those scenarios created by users.

The 1.3 version of **Harpoon** will also be available in June with version 2.0 to follow early next year. A Windows version is also in the offing.

Be Virgin's guest: the one gigabyte CD ROM game Guest

Three-Sixty's next major release will be **Theatre of War**, a distinctly odd looking game that resembles a flexible version of chess, if that isn't a contradiction in terms.

Koei has been slow to keep up with the changes in technology, but **Pacific Theatre of Operations** looks to be an improvement on its recent releases. This is a game of carrier warfare, but other than that I cannot say as no information was available.

Asciiware is a new company looking to break into the software market, and its first game, **Spellcraft**, has nothing if not good credentials. One member of the programming team was Karl Buiter, who worked on **Hard Nova**, while EA founder Joe Ybarra is president of the development company that produced the game, the essence of which is spellcasting.

Lest there be any doubt about this the press blurb describes the game as containing 'the most sophisticated magic system ever created for a fantasy adventure game'. Not feeling in a particularly magical mood after four days on my pegs I was unable to test the validity of this claim. It does, however, *look* to be just the ticket for apprentice wizards – the 256-colour graphics and animation are excellent. The duration of play is estimated to be 40–100 hours. Clear that hard disk, though – **Spellcraft** will take up 10Mb of real estate.

Sports fans will be pleased to hear that Micro League Sports is adding 256 colour VGA and digitized graphics to all its new releases. Another radical step for the company is the signing of a marketing agreement with *USA Today*. This will give Micro League players the opportunity to download stats on a daily basis from that paper's unique Sports Centre network – a dedicated on-line sports information and interactive game network.

League progress

Micro League's baseball game is now available on the Amiga and coming up soon will **Micro League Hockey** and **Micro League Basketball**. Like all the company's games these will emphasise stats in a league context.

The talk of the show was Virgin's **Guest**, which is hardly surprising considering it will be the first game to weigh in at 1 gigabyte. Coming on two CD ROM disks, **Guest** is a ghost

THE TAKING OF BEVERLY HILLS

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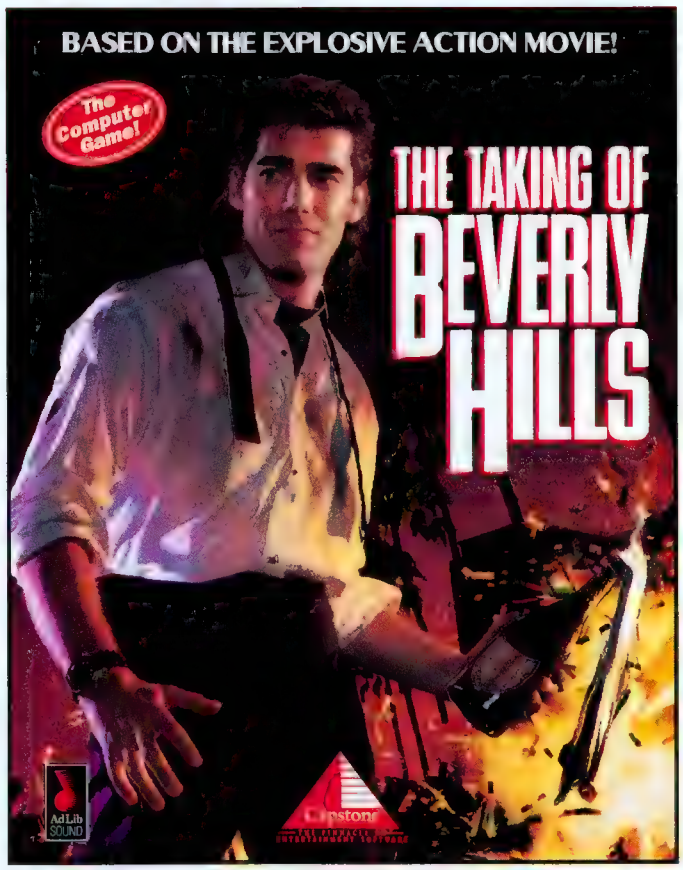

Missed the movie?? Want some clues??

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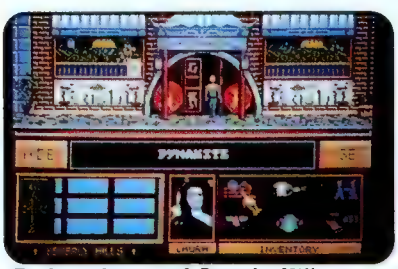
Based on the movie, THE TAKING OF BEVERLY HILLS, this action adventure computer game thrusts you in the role of football star Boomer Hayes, caught in the midst of a rivoting plot to thwart the raid of Rodeo Drive.

Can you stop the theft of a priceless Botticelli fresco and free Laura from the ruthless billionaire, Masterson? Beverly Hills is up for grabs and it's up to you to stop the fiery frenzy... and stay alive!



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Find objects and weapons to stop the looters and reach Masterson.

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story (based on a dramatization by Matthew Costello) which takes place in a fully modelled 'virtual' house rendered with Autodesk 3D studio.

The graphics and the animation are the best ever in a computer game bar none. The game play on the version being previewed appeared to consist of wandering through rooms, though doubtless more elements will be added.

The stunning **Dune**, previewed in issue 12, is now set for a spring release.

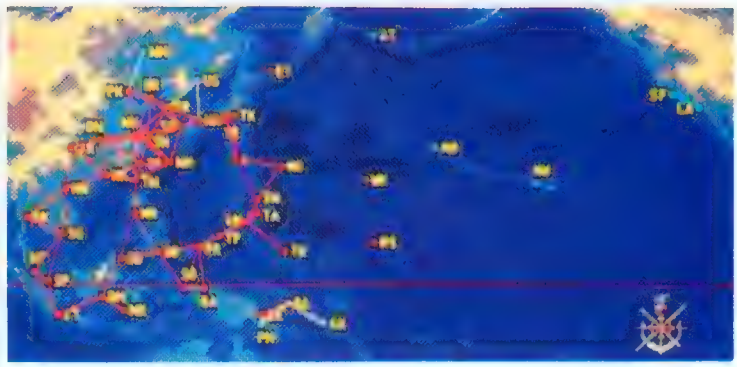
Lucasfilm's efforts are being concentrated on CD ROM and conversions to the Mac.

This is hardly surprising as Ron '**Monkey Island**' Gilbert's departure has created a big hole to fill. The company's next new release on the PC will be **Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis**.

Psygnosis was running **Planetside** again on its FM Towns machine, but this increasingly looks like a piece of high-tech software in search of a game.

A far better bet looked to be **Microcosm**, which takes up the *Fantastic Voyage* theme of an anatomical journey, but in an arcade strategy context.

Readers who were puzzled by my comment in the Pro and Cons of '91 piece (issue 16) regarding PR bimbos, might gain some enlightenment from this anecdote. Upon hearing a rumour about a **Joe Montana II**, I popped over to the Sega stand and introduced myself.



What a carrier on: Koei's Pacific Theatre of Operation

Probing journalist: 'Hallo, I'm enquiring about the PC release of **Joe Montana II**.'

PR bimbo: 'The Sega is a games console. We don't do PC games'.

'But what about **Joe Montana** for the PC?

'There was no PC version of that game.'

'But I reviewed it.'

'That's impossible.'

'But it was called **Joe Montana** and it came in a Sega box.' (By now I was doubting my sanity.)

'It must have been a bootleg.'

'I received it from your PR company.'

'You're definitely wrong. I'll introduce you to the developers and they'll tell you there was no **Joe Montana** for the PC.'

(To developers) 'Hi, I'm enquiring about **Joe Montana II** for the PC.'

'Oh sure, what would you like to know?' ❑

Special thanks the following for their help in preparing this report: Tom Byron, Karen Safran, Simon Jeffey, Jerry Luttrell, Fritz Bronner, Robert Sirotek, Ali Atabek, Arnold Hendrick, Bob Bates, Jerry Blair and Michelle from Caesar's Palace.

At the end of the day

Without doing an exact count, the message this year appeared to be 'more means less'. Increased development times, and their attendant costs, are making life tough for the little guy. As a result there appeared to be fewer exhibitors than usual, though this does rule out the possibility that there are hundreds of boffins slaving away in attics to produce works of undisputed genius.

Microprose had the best range by some distance. The company's decision to go public was a huge success and has enabled the company to pay off the debt (a result of a disastrous flirtation with a coin-op machine) that was crippling the company. **Darklands** will test the conservatism of the role-playing genre to the full while the company's 'under wraps' adventure game represents yet another new direction for them. In a more traditional mode **F-22**, due for a 1993 release looks set to become the **Wing Commander** of flight sims. *And* Microprose has got Sid Meier.

SSI looks as if it's getting ready for the 1990s with an impressive range. **Tales of Magic: Prophecy of the Shadow** sees the company and its 'gold box ' series moving into the world of digitized graphics.

Korea oriented

One has to admire SSI for the way it has persevered with its wargames at a time when many software houses were consigning them to the bin. Who else would produce a brand new game about the Korean conflict, a war that has just about been forgotten by everyone except those that participated in it?

EA was a big disappointment. A so-so looking Sherlock adventure game and a basketball game was not much of a new release schedule for one of the leaders of the industry. Luckily it has got its prolific UK operation to help the company out.

Overall, it looks like 1993 is going to be another solid year for games, and for once it doesn't look like you're going to need a new machine to participate in it.

On a more personal note, this was the first opportunity to gauge the reaction to *Strategy Plus*'s launch into the US market. Considering the relatively trenchant nature of some of our reviews there was a danger of us being regarded as the rude kid on the block, but as it transpired the welcome couldn't have been better. My thanks to all concerned.

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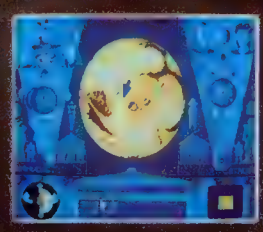

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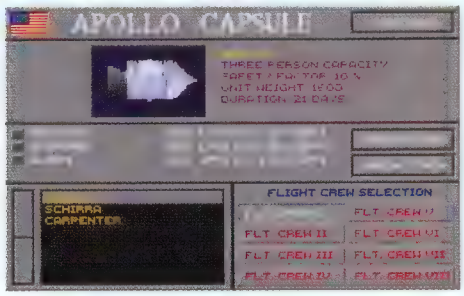

INTERPLAY IN SPACE

Brian Walker talks to imagination junkie and games designer Fritz Bronner

Few games have some such an interesting history as that of Interplay's forthcoming **Buzz Aldrin's Race into Space**. Inspired by a wild west game, made into a extremely low-tech boardgame before undergoing a metamorphosis into a full-blown multimedia software package put together by an actor and an astronaut, this is a program with *history*.

Fritz Bronner was watching television one night back in the 1970s. At the same time he was playing the Avalon Hill game **Gunslinger** with a bunch of friends he describes as 'imagination junkies'. In-between shoot-outs, Fritz noticed a rocket about to take off on the silver screen. Being something of an 'odds person' he asked his fellow cowboys: 'What are the odds of a failure?' This triggered the thought: what are the major sequences in a launch?

Once he'd come up with an approximation (75%), Fritz started to roll the dice to see if the launch would be successful according to the 'book'. It then occurred to him that there were several other factors involved into getting the heap of metal airborne: there was research and development, budgeting, and the human factor.

These thoughts weren't entirely plucked out of thin air as Fritz spent seven years preparing to go to the Air Force Academy to become an astronaut. The only thing more difficult than getting into this institution was getting out of it, but Jimmy Carter solved both problems when he cut the funding for the space program, the upshot being that Fritz decided to become an actor.

Having successfully 'launched' a couple of rockets, Fritz managed to lure his friends away from the wild west and attempt to get a man into space. 'I came up with these horrific caveman drawings of satellites and capsules,' he says, 'and pretty soon everyone was screaming hysterically: "God, it really works, it really works, I got a man in space!"' And thus the seed for a game was planted.

Six months later Fritz found himself working in New York in a soap. His girlfriend, a flight attendant, was away most weekends, so out came the caveman drawings once again. Eventually he came up with a game system and an artist friend contributed some respectable artwork for the prototype.

Fritz takes up the story: 'This was around 1985. By this time we'd come up with a name – **Lift Off**. We'd actually made a pretty smart prototype – big counters and a pretty mapboard. I started to send 'teasers' to boardgame companies asking if they were interested, but most of them said they didn't look at unsolicited games. West End Games in New York expressed an interest, but at that

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time they were doing **Web and Starship** so they didn't really want another space game.

'I then moved out to California – after all, I was supposed to be an actor. I phoned up Task Force Games in LA and got in touch with John Olsen. "You gotta see me, John, you gotta see me" – it was like I was auditioning for a role. Sometimes you just have to bust down doors. So I got to see him and we played the game.

'At first it was like, "Oh, god, he's done something really stupid and blown it," but he finally won the game. His hands were up in the air and he was screaming, "We're definitely interested. We're definitely interested." Unfortunately they were really strapped for cash so the production of the published game suffered as a result. The only part which I was happy with was the cover artwork by Ken Hodges – he'll be doing the artwork for the Interplay box.'

I first met Fritz at the CES in Las Vegas last year when he was repeating the whole process of hocking his baby, but this time in the form of a software demo.

Dog work

'We'd just formed a company called Strategic Visions specifically to produce a software version of **Lift Off**. It sounds grand, but it was just me, another guy, and a dog.

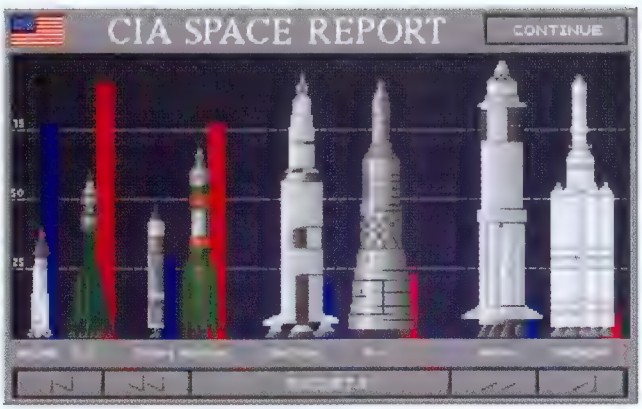
'Despite this we put together a very slick presentation. We used the boardgame box and threw in a few toys, plus some mission hints from NASA. This went out to about 30 software companies. Of these, two said they didn't accept outside submissions, but everyone else responded. Amazingly, quite a few of them were familiar with **Lift Off**. We also included screen shots with the package so it looked real professional. People would open it and say: "Hey! Is this game done?"

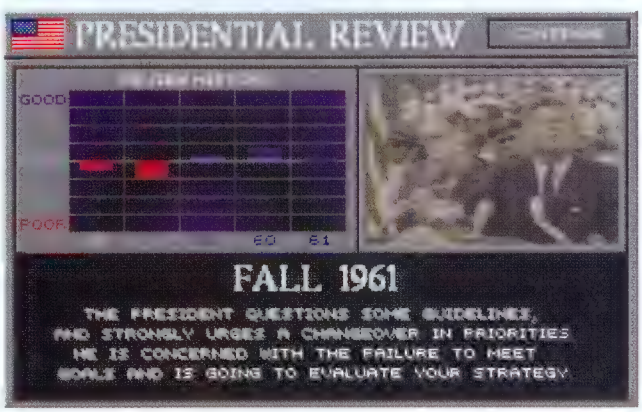
Hard fax

'The important thing was that everyone took us seriously. Barely had the thing gone out than we were getting faxed offers back, totally unlike the boardgames business. Interplay was one of the first companies to respond, in fact as soon as I went to see them they said they'd read an article on the game in a magazine you used to edit (*Games International — Ed*) so they knew it was a good game.

'The nice thing about Interplay was being able to deal with Brian Fargo (the president) directly. With some companies it was like talking to a skyscraper. A guy would stick his head out of the window and yell: "How are you? Listen, we have a question about the game." I'd answer him and he'd stick his head back in. Ten minutes later he'd pop his head back out and ask a totally different question. So I'm wondered what the hell's going on in there?'

The boardgame version was multiplayer, but the software version will only be for two players (plus a modem option) – the Americans or the Soviets are the choices on offer. There will also be a third computer player who will represent either the Asians or the Europeans. In the future Interplay hopes to bring out an expansion disk where the third country can be taken over by a human player. This is impossible in the basic version owing to disk space, according to Fritz. 'We are talking about so much graphics to include an extra country, but we would definitely like to do it later. I think Europeans would really like to represent Europe in the game.'

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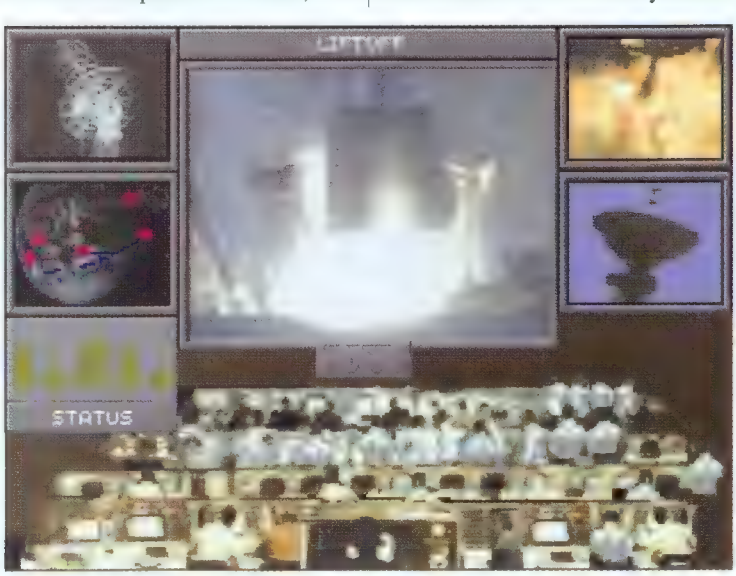

The emphasis in the game is very much on R&D and not at all like Virgin's **Shuttle**, which is essentially a flight sim in space. Quite a lot, however, has been added to what was present in the boardgame version.

'What I didn't want,' says Fritz, 'was a two-dimensional transplant. To me, that's what a lot of games are. So I thought, what was it like when I was a kid? Why I am a such a space fanatic? I was there at the Apollo 1 launch, January 28, 1967. I saw the mission control, and watched the Gemini missions. When I envisaged the idea of a computer game four or five years ago, I wanted to throw all this in. I just didn't know if a computer could handle all this stuff. But my attitude is: if we can't do this, *why* can't we do this? I was a nightmare for the design team.'

Like the boardgame, **Race into Space** will be turn based except for the mission phase which players will perform in mission order. The astronauts, which players will have to

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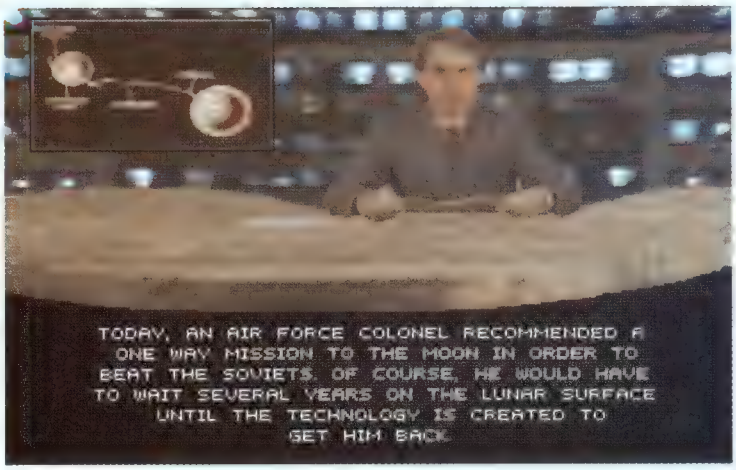
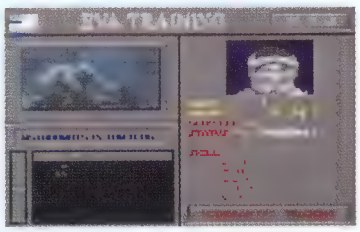
CES
LAS VEGAS


TODAY, AN AIR FORCE COLONEL RECOMMENDED A
ONE WAY MISSION TO THE MOON IN ORDER TO
BEAT THE SOVIETS. OF COURSE, HE WOULD HAVE
TO WAIT SEVERAL YEARS ON THE LUNAR SURFACE
UNTIL THE TECHNOLOGY IS CREATED TO
GET HIM BACK.



hire, will be historically based replete with historical skills. These will change marginally, but significantly, from game to game to enhance the replay aspect.

In the modem game, turns can be completed off-line and then fed into the core when both players are ready. The computer then resolves the moves and spews out the results to the players. It is possible to stay on-line all the time should anyone wish to rack up a huge phone bill. Turn length can vary from as little as ten minutes to forty minutes depending on the difficulty level.

Spam in a can

The event cards in the boardgame will now manifest themselves as newscasts with newsreel footage and animated sequences (including JFK making a speech). The CD ROM version will contain digitized speech of all broadcasts. As the game starts off in the 1950s, the newscasts will be black and white. The newscaster actually ages (near the end he acquires a toupee) and as the game progresses the broadcasts switch into colour.

The time frame all this occurs in is 1957–77. The short-term goal is to get a man into space; the overall goal is to land a man (or woman) on the moon and return him to Earth safely. Fritz says this focus reflects the fact the space program really was a space *race*.

As a deterrent to budget cutters, a culpability aspect has been hard wired into the program: players who treat their astronauts as 'spam in a can' will suffer accordingly — cut costs to the point where astronauts are getting fried and the only shuttle you'll be catching will be that to the welfare line. Fritz says this wasn't inspired by the Challenger tragedy, but was part of the original boardgame design.

Come game end all aspects of the player performance will be saved into a huge database. What's the earliest you got a man into space? What's the earliest you got a woman into space? What's the earliest you got to the moon with the fewest casualties? This has all been included to enhance replayability.

Despite the size of the program, Fritz says it will run on a 286/16, and even on a 286/12, though the animation will be a little jerky. The CD ROM version is being developed in parallel, though the actual release of this version will be probably be a couple of a months after that for the PC.

The potential for sequels is such that they could outnumber the *Rocky* movies. 'There's the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (the JPL scenario),' enthuses Fritz. 'This is a grand tour of the planets which takes place from the mid 1970s to the 1990s, where there's a constant battle with the military to get a slot on the shuttle. And then, of course, there's Mars which poses a whole new set of problems.'

Chat show

Astronaut Buzz Aldrin's involvement with the game stemmed from a TV talk show appearance, on which he speculated what a fine thing it would be if there was something capable of enabling him people to share the excitement he felt on the first moon landing. Interplay's radar picked this up and contact we made though a friend of a friend of Brian Fargo. Within weeks Buzz was on board. His input goes way beyond just being a name on a box.

'Buzz has been tremendously enthusiastic about this project,' says Fritz. 'He's come up with a lot of artwork and been invaluable in providing information about what the astronauts went through.'

The unstinting enthusiasm of the would-be astronaut turned actor cum game designer, coupled with the experience of Aldrin and the technical expertise of Interplay, should ensure that **Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space** is a contest in which all the participants are winners. ❑

TOP SECRET

KGB

To ALL NEW KGB AGENTS
From CENTRAL CONTROL
Special Instructions:
DESTROY INFORMATION ONCE RECEIVED AND REPORT TO YOUR COMPUTER TERMINAL FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON YOUR MISSION

It's your first day at Department P, Moscow KGB and you can't help but think that whoever arranged for your transfer here either has a strange sense of humor or hates your guts.

Despite all the upheaval in the Soviet government in recent years, the KGB, or Committee for State Security, is still the most feared and pervasive intelligence-gathering network in the world. Only now the KGB itself is under secret surveillance - by you!

Questions lead to more questions but one thing is clear - the KGB reeks of corruption and you're about as safe as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs. Be advised, comrade - you must act quickly and shrewdly to uncover the conspirators before they uncover you.

FEATURES:

* Movie-like storyline filled with surprising twists and intrigue
* Intuitive Icon-based Interface - that means no more wading through menu after menu
* VCR-style "REWIND" option for keeping track of important clues and information

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Virgin GAMES

СССР -1991- ПОЧТА

Reader Service No. 95

Spectrum signs up

UK readers wondering what happened to Spectrum Holobyte's **Falcon 3.0** can rest easy. As one of Mirrorsoft's UK affiliate labels (see box), Spectrum Holobyte was one of the companies most affected when that company collapsed.

Fortunately **Falcon 3.0** came out just in time to get caught in the draught. The upshot is that Spectrum Holobyte has now signed an agreement with Microprose (UK) that will mean all of the former's products will be now be distributed in the UK by the Big M.

The first release in this historic agreement will be the **Falcon 3.0**. This will include the 'patches' that Spectrum brought out to correct a few minor bugs.

Registered users of the previous version should contact Spectrum Holobyte to obtain the upgrade (it pays to register).

Next on line for a UK release should be **Super Tetris for Windows 3.0** followed by **Crisis in the Kremlin** and **A10** – one of but many parts in Spectrum Holobyte's Electronic Battlefield System.

Mirrorsoft cracked

Mirrorsoft became the first software victim of the Robert Maxwell scandal when the company was sold to Acclaim – an firmbest known for its arcade titles. All the Mirrorsoft staff were dismissed.

It is not known exactly what the new agreement with Acclaim involves, though probably one thing is does not entail is assuming Mirrorsoft's liabilities.

Labels such as PSS will probably disappear completely while the situation concerning Acme (nee Cinemaware), which Mirrorsoft distributed is confused.

Limited supplies of **TV Sports Baseball** (US title **Bo Jackson Baseball**) hit the shops, but **Rollerbabes** is likely to be held back until a new distributor is found.

Quite where this leaves Mirrorsoft's current titles is anybody's guess.

What is known is that Konami, one of the labels Mirrorsoft distributed, will be setting up its own UK office.

THE CONVERTED

John Madden Football (Electronic Arts) for the Amiga

The Adventures of Willy Beamish (Dynamix) for the Amiga (PC version reviewed issue 15)

Wayne Gretzky Hockey 2 (Bethesda/ US Gold) for the Amiga (PC version reviewed issue 7)

Command HQ (Microprose) for the Mac (PC version reviewed issue 5)

Armour-Geddon (Psygnosis) for the PC (Amiga version reviewed issue 10)

Obitus (Psygnosis) for the PC. VGA and all soundboards supported, though EMS required for sound samples

Atomino (Psygnosis) for the PC

Red Baron for the Amiga, 14MHz or greater recommended (PC version reviewed issue 6)

Panzer Battles (SSG) for the Amiga

Omar takes the plunge

Anyone out there play Bridge? Thought not, but that's no reason why you shouldn't know about Interplay's **Omar Sharif on Bridge** the world's first talking bridge game ('Don't jump! Don't jump!').

That's right, the program actually speaks as it plays and teaches bridge. Players will be able to hear the eponymous Omar congratulate them on bold finesse and remind them what a great film *Dr Zhivago* was. Apart from the on-disk tutorial, options include the facility to set up one's own hands to practice slams, or to correct specific weaknesses in their own game.

There are also a number of 'what if' scenarios with the 'take back' and 'rebid' reatures. Players can opt for random hands or design their own hands. Novice mode allows the player to slow down or speed up the game, review bidding, and offer hints if the player gets stuck.

Omar Sharif Bridge features full VGA graphics that allow the player to select from several types of card decks and playing surfaces, a point-and-click interface, and a 1-4 player option. The game is available now in the US on the Interplay label. Electronic Arts say they will 'probably' release the game in the UK, though at the time of going to press they were unable to confirm this.

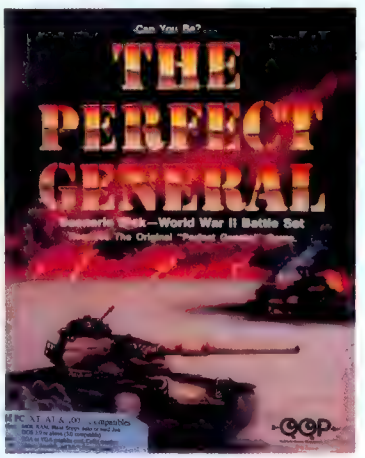
Window stressing

The world's most stressful job is widely considered to be that of air traffic controller, so anyone looking for a bit of simulated stress should check out Wesson International's **TRACON for Windows**.

Wesson used its own $50 000 professional air traffic control simulator to create this program. Features include weather models that create storm cells that ebb and flow across the screen, and a direct two-way link with **Microsoft Flight Simulator**, with aircraft from this program appearing on a **Windows 3.0** environment screen.

There is also a two-way digital communication link between controller and pilot allowing players to 'talk' to each other.

Available soon for PCs running **Windows 3.0**.



Perfect punch ups

QQP has released a scenario disk for **The Perfect General** whose campaigns use famous battles of the Second World War as their models.

Fourteen new scenarios are included: Sicily, Guadalcanal, Kasserine Pass, Gafsa, Anzio, Utah Beach, Omaha Beach, Okinawa, Saipan, Gazala-Bir Hacheim, Iwo Jima, Arnheim, Oahu, Karkov, and Pegasus Bridge.

The scenario disk includes an upgrade to version 1.02 which takes care of a few minor bugs, particulary in modem play. Available now for the PC and Amiga.

Impressions of the East

The latest release in Impressions' series of 'miniature' games is **Samurai – Way Of the Warrior**. Unlike the other games of the series this will include a strategic level game as well as the usual man-to-man fighting.

At the start of each game, players are allocated territories; each town within these territories carries an income and an initial sum of money. Players use this cash to buy units of their choice and subsequently to purchase reinforcements. Armies on each side comprise a wide variety of units and include samurai, archers, spearmen and arquebusiers. All are depicted in historically accurate costumes and armed to the teeth with historically accurate weapons.

Samurai – Way of the Warrior will be released in April for the PC and Amiga.

The PC version will support 256-colour VGA and the Adlib sound board. Extra features will be available for Amiga with one or more megabytes of RAM.

Another new game from Impressions is **Crime City**, this also introduces a new label known as IF (Interactive Fantasy Fiction) which the company will be using on its forthcoming role-playing and adventure games.

Samurai – Way of the Warrior: due for release in April

Crime City is a icon-driven graphic adventure in which the player's task is to clear daddy's name of a crime he did not commit. The hunt for clues involves making telephone calls, share trading, and computer hacking (tut,tut), plus there is a subgame to play on the computer which will also be used in the course of investigations.

The second release on the IF label will be **The Hand of St James** which is set in a monastery and features killer monks. Holy Eco!

US Gold signs German soccer boss

Football, soccer, call it what you wish, will obviously get a shot in the arm this summer when **Bundesliga Professional Manager**, programmed by top European outfit Software 2000, will be transferred to the Brum-based US Gold FC for an undisclosed fee.

The game will be completely translated so budding Ron Knees will obviously not have to worry about the language or cuisine problems involved in managing clubs like Bayern Munchen, or Kaiserslauten. Instead they will be able to manage top English clubs like Manchester Utd, Leeds Utd, and Blackpool.

The rumoured title of the UK version is **Premium Soccer Manager**. It will most definitely be game of two halves, not over until the 90 minutes are up etc.

The fact that the game will come out on the PC first will obviously be the icing on the cake for many players, though at the end of day there will be an Amiga version so everyone's in with a chance.

There will probably be a cup competition included in the program, so if a club is knocked out then the manager can concentrate on the league.

Described as 'sophisticated' this one definitely gets our vote of confidence. Scampi and chips in a basket optional.

Grand master flash

Sargon V may sound like a planet, but in fact it is the latest chess game from Activision. Coming with over 100 different opening moves stored in memory the program is rated at 2200 ELO – ELO, what's all this then?.

Extended memory is supported to enable comprehensive analysis and faster response.

Ten levels of game play are offered ranging from beginner to professional. Game modes include: tournaments, blitz, and blindfold (tie a dishcloth around the monitor). One novel feature is the option to compare one's move with that of a chess master.

Sargon V should be available now for the PC.

Simply better

Maxis's best-selling game **Sim City** will be released for multi-media PCs in spring.

Enhancements include: full motion video 'news reports' updating conditions in the city, high-res 256-colour VGA, multiple architectures to customize cities, new sound effects, multi-tasking support, and 'bookmarks' to allow the player instantly to return to a designated area.

USA TODAY

Merchant Colony (reviewed issue 8, new keyboard options and docking facilities since added) – Impressions to Merit Software

Cohort PC (reviewed issue 8) – Impressions to Merit Software

Final Conflict (reviewed issue 4) – Impressions to Merit Software

The Killing Cloud (reviewed issue 9) – Mirrorsoft to Konami

Riders of Rohan (reviewed issue 11) – Mirrorsoft to Konami

Utopia (reviewed issue 14) – Mirrorsoft to Konami

Mega lo Mania (reviewed issue 13) – Mirrorsoft to Konami

UK TODAY

Patton Strikes Back (reviewed issue 15) – Broderbund to Electronic Arts

Harpoon Battlesets – Three-Sixty to Electronic Arts

Sim Ant (reviewed issue 15) – Maxis to Ocean Software

THE THINK TANK

Civilization – the journey home, by Steven Wartofsky

Civilization is unquestionably one of the most playable and engrossing games ever designed. Even more so than **Railroad Tycoon**, Sid Meier's last big effort, **Civilization** wraps the player in a matrix of ideas, problems and connections guaranteed to reward serious contemplation with interesting results.

To begin with, **Civilization** is clearly a 'conquer the world' strategy game. In this tradition, co-operation ultimately takes a back seat to competition, which means that war is an inevitability. It's not so much a question of whether, as when and how much. This certainly adds to the playability of the design, insomuch as the tension of wondering whether the player will survive duking it out with another civilization is sustained regularly throughout the 6000 years of a game's cycle.

But it also precludes a more liberal interpretation of the ways in which civilization might develop. Mutuality and exchange is probably much more responsible for cultural development in the course of world history than competition and insistence on proprietary rights to ideas; periods of openness, wide-ranging trade, sharing of new-found technologies and ideas all accelerate the increase of prosperity and peace for those involved.

Civilization *does* take all this into account (it would merely be another strategy game if it didn't); the player regularly encounters opportunities for exchanges of technologies in diplomatic conversations, and simple trade routes can be established which significantly enhance the wealth of the civilizations involved. Diplomatic embassies can be set up to monitor other civilizations as well.

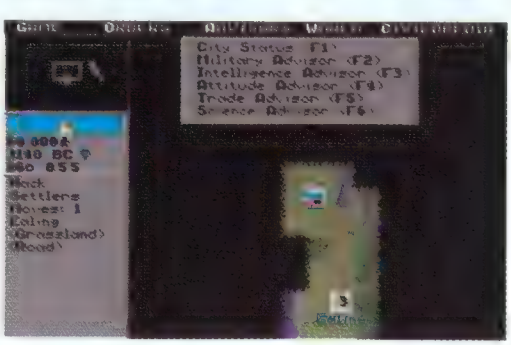
Trade, an important aspect of real-world civilization, ends up playing a relatively minor role in the game. Trade can have significant effects, but the process of developing trade between cultures is itself only rudimentarily represented in the game's design.

The real limit in all this is that unlike **Sim City** or **Sim Earth**, one cannot play **Civilization** in pure construction mode. In other words, even at the easy level (the progressively more difficult levels basically increase the ferocity of competing civilizations, as well as limit the player's own abilities to expand), the player must worry as much about the development and expansion of destructive abilities as about constructive ones.

This is fine in that no civilization has ever been free from having to defend its cities and borders against incursion, whether from nomadic outsiders (generically labelled barbarians in the game) or from other nearby cultures. But the rate and intensity of invasion seems pegged a little too high to seem realistic. At each difficulty level, too, there is a detectable sameness to the character of invasive forces, in the sense that they always seem to attack at certain stages of development. The resulting impression is that the game has been ingeniously designed for play balance, in order to keep it interesting, at the expense, perhaps, of a greater amount of variety in the possibilities of cultural development.

This also implies a certain amount of linearity in the overall design of **Civilization**. The game is not an open-ended system, which allows the player to make choices contrary to those enforced by the structure of the game, but is instead a rigorously constructed set of parameters which it is up to the player, over the course of extensive play, to figure out.

In particular, the connections between technological advances – for good reasons – are set up in explicit branchings (these are fortunately spelled out quite fully both in the excellent manual and in the help and adviser functions present in the game



itself). The alphabet must be invented before writing, and of course literacy must follow all that. Banking requires a code of laws to function.

It's all too easy for the player to go through the game and make choices that might seem reasonable from a contemporary perspective, only to find out that something deemed trivial or of merely aesthetic value turns out to be of really utilitarian value. This is one game where eagerness to see what will happen next turn can prove to be counterproductive to enjoyment; thinking through research, expansion, resource allocation and economic choices systematically before acting is an absolute must to successful play of **Civilization**, ultimately one of the real benefits of its linearity.

I'm sure this linearity will seem somewhat arbitrary to many playing the game, but in fact it can be quite thought-provoking; Sid Meier is to be congratulated for working carefully through a number of historical relations that might to the casual eye seem counter-intuitive. At a time when most of us have lost any sense of the practical as well as ornamental aspects of many of the more aesthetic elements of our cultures, **Civilization** can serve as a direct reminder that it weren't always so. There's even some amusing, if somewhat cynical, commentary on the practical role that arts and entertainment can play during times of social upheaval. Oddly enough, the game's linearity in this dimension serves to undo an excessive commonsense linearity probably characteristic of most of its players' thinking on matters of culture and progress.

There are adherents of both linear and open-ended styles of game play, so alluding to **Civilization**'s linearity isn't necessarily a criticism so much as a clarification of what to expect. The good news is that for all its rigor and built-in linearities, **Civilization** is simply so massive a design that such rigour is unlikely to limit enjoyment of the game any time soon.

It's a wonderful, informative game, that compensates for its excessively war-like emphasis with a wide-ranging introduction to the interconnections between cultural development and politico-economic success. I'll still turn regularly to **Powermonger** to enjoy building a peaceable kingdom every now and then, though.

Terra firma to Alpha Centauri

Mike Woodhouse hands out the itinerary

There are two ways to conclusively 'win' at **Civilization** – conquer the world or be first to Alpha Centauri. Although no decision is necessary right at the start of a new game, it's a good idea for a player to know which way they incline towards and plan accordingly. Most of the time, the decisions boil down to the old 'guns or butter' situation, whether to invest resources and cash in new military strength or to keep a high research rate and simply operate enough of an armed force to maintain a reasonable level of defence.

Whatever the ultimate goal, it's essential to get off to a good start – expand rapidly and grab as much land as possible. In the early stages (say the first 2000 years), once the initial defences have been installed in a city, build settlers not granaries – although the latter give an increase in population the delay while those 60 resources are built up is too much. Also, the granaries have to be paid for in maintenance, which means that the 100% research rate is compromised.

Keeping the population of a city under the disorder limit for the difficulty level obviates the need for tax dollars until the form of government can be switched to something like republic, where taxes should not need to be set above 30% unless a program of military rush jobs is required (or enemy cities need to be bribed).

Even after all the suitable sites have been filled with cities, it's not yet time to stop building settlers – get the roads built, the mines opened and the irrigation channels dug. The settlers can then either join cities (but watch out for disorder when a sudden influx of population occurs), or head off to other land masses on the triremes or sailships, two or three of which having been built by now.

Find out where the other civilizations are and set up frontiers – it's no fun having vast numbers of enemy units wandering around your homeland swearing eternal friendship, mainly because eternal doesn't necessarily mean for ever.

Particularly in the early stages, meeting with other civilizations (or civs) will usually result in an offer to trade technology, as long as each side has something the other doesn't. To make trade more likely, it's often worth concentrating R&D towards a particular thread, ignoring other areas completely. The computer civs will normally go the horseback riding-feudalism-chivalry route, so there is no need to ever waste a light bulb on this line – it can almost always be acquired through trade.

Often, it will be necessary to shut down a neighbouring civ, especially if good building land is scarce. There are two choices: cash or bash. Either send in the diplomats to first attempt to promote disorder and then pay off the population or lay siege the city, occupying as many of its good production squares as necessary and then sending in the heavy offensive units. Remember that most high attack value units are very weak defensively, so stack them with a good defensive unit.

All military units should really be veterans (well, maybe not militia) but this doesn't mean having to have a barracks in every city. Simply build the units in a few high output cities which have barracks, then move the units to their new homes and use the 'H' key to assign them to their new station. This is a good way of reducing the embarrassment of barbarians taking away new frontier towns which haven't yet built their own defences.

The Great Library WOW (Wonder Of the World) offers a distinct

Continued on page 41

Rapid technology

Getting ahead in Civilization, by Jennifer Schlickbernd

Choices abound when it comes to deciding which technology (henceforth referred to as 'tech') to work on at any given time. Most of the time, the choices will be influenced (but not necessarily dictated) by what's happening in the game.

Another important factor is the level at which the game is being played. If behind the other players in tech development (likely at king and emperor levels), then techs will need to be developed in a different order from that if the player is way ahead. Other strategies to compensate for the lack of tech will also need to be developed.

The most important technology to have is railroads. This is because having railroads built in any used city square increases that squares development by 50%, no matter what it is developing. But it's a long way down the tracks, and here's the tech needed to get there: steam engine (physics (navigation (astronomy (mysticism (ceremonial burial), mathematics (masonry, alphabet), map making)), invention (engineering (construction (currency (bronze working)), the wheel), literacy (writing, code of laws))).

Getting to railroad still gives a lot of flexibility in the early game. The only detour that may be necessary is pottery. Don't worry about trade, because caravans really aren't useful for some time.

The significant early military advances are bronze working/phalanx for defence, the wheel/chariot for mobility and mathematics/catapult for offence. Ceremonial burial is important to develop to get the temple city improvement, along with currency for the marketplace.

Generally speaking, don't bother with the horseback riding/chivalry/feudalism path. This leads to nothing in the later game, and chariots are better than cavalry, and nearly equal to knights.

When behind in tech, one way to get at least equal with everyone else is to exchange knowledge with other countries. Many times when starting on an island, the player will find that his country is the only one there. When that happens, then quickly develop at least the sail in order to encourage contact on foreign soil instead of locally (where a bad negotiation will mean war on your carefully irrigated grounds!).

WOW now

Later in the game, development of philosophy is important, because it opens up a good number of other techs. Industrialization is also significant, not only for the factory capability, but also for the women's suffrage Wonder of the World (WOW). Religion is good because cathedrals are less expensive to maintain and create more content people than colosseums. Religion is also a positive if the country being fought against has the oracle WOW, since religion knocks it out, and its loss may trigger several city revolts. Banking is good for the bank improvement, as university is good for the university. The only reason to get medicine is for the chemistry it leads to, while I don't develop magnetism until I'm ready for electricity.

The frigate unit is not that great, and usually I can get better return on a different development like gunpowder. If the cure for cancer hasn't been built and you have spare building capacity, genetic engineering is good, otherwise don't bother until the end, since it leads nowhere. Speaking of gunpowder, the musketeers it allows are far better defensive units than the phalanxes.

The next major military invention is metallurgy for the cannon, followed closely by conscription for the rifleman. Steel can't be beat for the battleship unit. Cruisers are nice, but battleships will more effectively wear down cities. For ground troops, automobile and the armour unit bring more modern infantry units into play.

I haven't talked about governments, but that appears to be more dependent on specific playing styles. Non-communists generally want to get to democracy as soon as possible for all the trade units it gives in city production. Also, if the pyramids are built, this alleviates the need to worry about developing governments for a long time.

Closely related to tech developments (if only because their existence depends on the tech developed) is the building of the Wonders of the World. The pyramids, JS Bach's cathedral, and women's suffrage are all necessary if a quick trip to democracy without much city revolt is desired. Michelangelo's chapel is nice too, but if JS Bach's and Michelangelo's are available, take JS Bach nearly every time. The only time this would be declined is if it had to be built on a one or two city island, since it's only good for the continent. Michelangelo's chapel can be dangerous too, since it disappears after the development of communism, which could be close to hand.

Be careful of building the oracle, or the hanging gardens. The hanging gardens disappears with invention which, since it is assumed that railroad technology is being developed, will be arrived at pretty quickly. The oracle disappears with religion, again, a pretty popular tech.

Not all WOW's that last forever should be built over WOW's that don't, if there is a choice. Unless the player is a major naval force I'd take Isaac Newton's college over Magellan's expedition. At that point in the game, it should be a while before nuclear fission shows up and the bonus to the libraries and universities will be significant under Isaac Newton's college.

Later in the game, Hoover dam is wonderful for those civilizations that are on substantial continents. SETI is a good replacement for Isaac Newton's college (and for a while these can be had together). The cure for

cancer is nice, but by that time there should be enough trade units to manipulate the tax rate effectively. I'm not saying don't build it, but I wouldn't go out of my way unless I could see a clear benefit.

The Apollo program and the Manhattan project are special. No one can build spaceship components until the Apollo program is built, and no one can build nuclear units until the Manhattan project is built. Of course, don't build the Apollo program until all of the components are in place. As far as the Manhattan project goes, it probably depends on one's opponents. If Russians, Greeks or Zulus are in the game and appear to have the tech to build nuclear, let them build the Manhattan project, don't give them additional offensive weapons.

Space race

The Egyptians and the Indian may use nuclear technology if available, so if they are the closest competition, it's probably a push. If you surrounded by pacifists (like the Babylonians) who are building their spaceship faster, then build the Manhattan project, bomb their capital and ruin their spaceship. It sounds cruel, I know, but it's a way of winning the game.

The United Nations and the Great Wall force the enemy to offer peace. Frankly, these are not worth much since the computer players will sue for peace on one turn and sneak attack on the next.

The WOW's that only affect specific cities – Colossus, Copernicus' observatory and Shakespeare's theatre can be good in large cities. They are not high on my hit list, but can really affect trade income (Colossus and Copernicus particularly) if the city is over 10 people symbols.

It will need to be carefully determined if the lighthouse and Magellan's expedition are needed. The extra move is nice, but not great unless it's a turn difference between two continents. The great library is generally a waste at the chieftain, warlord and prince levels since with care, one should be one of the two most advanced civilizations and will get very little from it. At the higher levels, it may be necessary to build this if the resources are available. Darwin's voyage can be nice if one is close to two significant tech advances like gunpowder or automobile. ❑

Continued from page 39

advantage in the research area if built early, and can be of particular use to a warlike leader who has forsaken the leading edge of technology but doesn't want to get completely left behind. Beware of the single highly advanced civ though, and reduce the desirability of the Great Library for games with fewer than seven civs or where you know that some have already bitten the dust.

The pyramids are always worth building, even if no imminent change of government is planned. It's often possible to switch to democracy for 10 of 15 turns, push the luxury rate up around 50% and put the whole country into a 'We Love The President' orgy, coincidentally increasing population by vast numbers into the bargain. This can generate an almost unassailable lead in the population stakes.

As the game develops, I recommend concentrating research on the threads which join together to allow railroads – the production increases can be awesome. I keep a chart handy which shows all the developments required to get to railroad – remember that secondary requirement exists for most advances.

As city population increases, people start to moan. The simplest way of stopping them from rioting is to throw them an Elvis or two. This works fine until you sit down and work out the cost. Then build cathedrals, colosseums and temples (in that order of preference – work out the number of people affected per maintenance dollar) and put those entertainers back to work (or convert them into scientists or tax men).

In the later game, a number of WOWs are available, all of which offer significant benefits. In the ideal situation, all should be built, since they improve the leader's rating. More often, insufficient production can be diverted for everything, and choices have to be made.

For doves, the United Nations reduces the likelihood of misery-inducing wars, while the hawks should always look at women's suffrage, because it allows unhappy face-free operations under the relatively productive republic form of government.

When the space race is the main objective, try to get a good idea of where the other civs are at in terms of technology and production. It's no good building nice spaceships which don't get there first. Think about building up large numbers of resources before building the Apollo project, so that the first three modules (to get the minimum 10 000 colonists away) are built straight away.

Plan the allocation of spaceship parts to cities carefully – don't build in excess of the required number. Watch what the other civs are doing – if they're ahead then consider using diplomats, money, and maybe the odd nuke or two to slow them down.

In dire emergency, the opposition's capital may need to be taken out in order to get a leading spaceship to turn round. If this has to be done, it has to be prepared for in advance – a typical ship takes 10–12 years to reach Alpha Centauri, which isn't a whole lot of time to take out what is likely to be a large well-defended city. Stepping on the gas pedal is no substitute for good planning.

POWER POP

T Worthington on Populous II, Populous World Editor, and Powermonger World War I

POPULOUS II

Designed by
Bullfrog

Published by
Electronic Arts

Systems
Available for the ST and Amiga; PC version in June/July

POPULOUS WORLD EDITOR

Published by
Electronic Arts

Systems
Available for the ST and Amiga

POWERMONGER: WORLD WAR I

Published by
Electronic Arts

Systems
Available for the ST and Amiga

Notes
Powermonger is required to run this program. The latest ETA on Powermonger for the PC is March

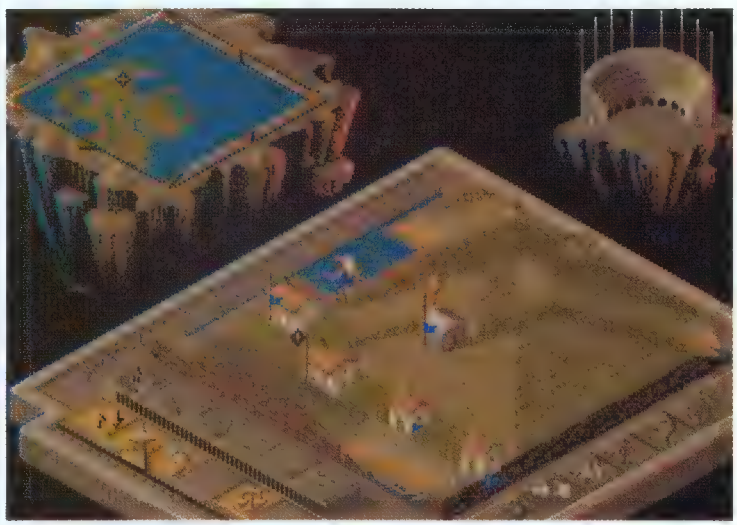
Ask anyone with an interest in games to name two British programming teams and chances are Bullfrog and the Bitmap Brothers will be the first names to roll off their tongues.

Bullfrog first came to prominence with **Populous** – the original 'god' game. Many look-alikes followed; **Mega-lo-Mania**, **Utopia**, and **Realms** all owe a debt to **Populous**. For some bizarre reason this program was written in C, but the team quickly moved on to proper assembly language programming with its next hit **Flood**, a cutesy platform game. This sold well enough to keep the Bullfrogs together for their next big game: **Powermonger**. Electronic Arts insisted on the title despite the far more dramatic, and sensible, title **Warmonger** that the team had used during writing.

Now, many moons on, Bullfrog has released several new products. The first, and the most anticipated, is **Populous II**. Also included in Santa's 'slightly too late for Christmas but you might pick it up in a January sale' bag are **The Populous World Editor** and **Powermonger: World War I**. If that's not enough for you, the budget release of the original **Populous** arrived just before Christmas as well!

Populous placed the player in the role of a deity of good locked in a struggle over control of hundreds of worlds with evil, personified by the computer or another player on another computer. Each side gains power from worship, therefore each side wishes its worshippers to be the most populous – hence the name.

The idea was novel and the only criticisms that really stuck were that it was repetitive, particularly in the early stages when the players are mostly concerned with levelling the ground, and that the game as a whole became slow and unresponsive in the end phases when the populations had grown enormously.



The gods strike back (above and below): Populous 2

The second of these problems has been solved satisfactorily in **Populous II** simply by not writing it in a high level language. An attempt has been made to solve the former problem by putting in an auto-pilot option which will look after the landscaping while the player concentrates look on divine interventions.

The game play has changed very little, there is just much more of it – the single line of effects has been replaced by six spheres of control which each have five effects to choose from.

The main addition to the game is in the form of experience points which increase the player's power in the spheres of control of their choice. The player may thus progress towards becoming a particular type of deity: fire, earth, air, water, people, and plants are the possible dominions, and experience may be gained in any combination the player sees fit. As the game progresses rains of fire, new improved earthquakes and volcanoes, truly heroic heroes, storms, thunderbolts, plagues, pillars of fire,

pools which change allegiance, whirlwinds and masses of other horrid things are flung around the map in a desperate attempt to settle an argument without diplomacy.

There is a oft-mentioned problem about being first with a new idea: people expect you to continue being fresh, ignoring the difficulty of coming up with even one new idea in an industry which contains enough sharp minds to have almost sucked it dry of possibilities. Perhaps this explains the vague disappointment I felt after playing **Pop II** for a while. I had hoped for something which would grab my interest in the way the first game had, but this is asking too much of any sequel and the game should not really be damned for this.

The only real complaint I would level at **Pop II** is that for experienced **Populous** players it starts off far too easy; the worlds are aimed at the new player and 'old hands' do not get challenged until about world 100 plus. High scores allow one to skip worlds as in the original, but this still represents several hours of play before getting to the meat of the game. A password to, say, world 90 with free experience points would have been more satisfactory.

The Populous World Editor is, more than anything else, incorrectly packaged. If it had been marketed as four extra worlds for **Populous**, including an editor, I think it might have had much more appeal. A quick glimpse of the amount of work involved in editing a **Populous** world (as shown on the back of the box) was almost enough to make me go and lie down in a dark room.

World wise

In fact the **World Editor** is much more interesting and useful than the box would have you believe, in that it allows the internal values of the game to be changed. Tech levels, how fast the pops get tired while walking about and so on may be changed, and have an effect on the actual game. Editing the graphics is both a pain and, from a game play point of view, totally pointless. With this in mind **The World Editor** is about as good an add-on as one could hope for.

The final new Bullfrog release is also an add-on: **Powermonger: World War I**. The original Powermonger disk is required, although it is not necessary to have completed the game. **Powermonger** is superficially similar to **Populous** in the layout of the screen and in the concept of systematically conquering a series of territories or worlds before reaching the final battle. Once play begins, however, the difference in scale becomes obvious. In **Pop** the men represented whole migrant tribes, and buildings represented towns and cities. In **Powermonger** each figure is a person with a name, and each building has its own function. Trees may be cut down and taken to a workshop to be made into bows, pikes, boats or catapults. Mines may be sunk to get metal for swords, ploughs, pots and cannons. Individual sheep may be killed to provide an unfeasibly large amount of food.

Flaw plan

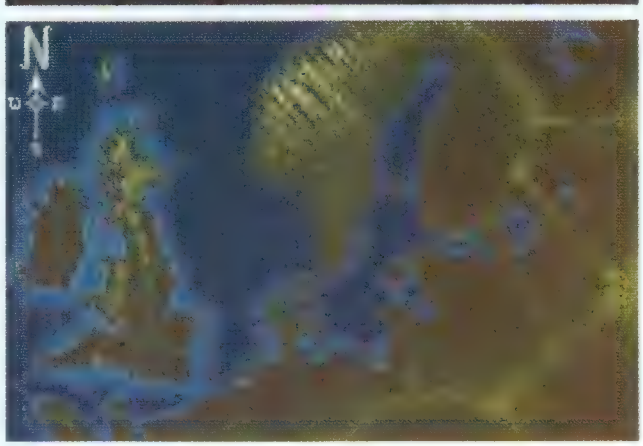
All this plus beautifully reproduced samples of flowing waters, bird calls and sword clashes made for one of the most atmospheric games ever produced. But (you just knew there was a 'but' coming) this was a flawed gem, the strategic element simply was not there. Each territory tended to come down to the same formula: find nearest weak village and take it over, take all its food (particularly sheep) and recruit all the people. Arm them if a workshop is available and food allows. Repeat at next village. A steamroller effect soon builds up and the land is yours; since a steamroller only requires one driver the possibilities of the other generals were rarely explored or needed.

This is a basic flaw in the underlying game and unfortunately the WWI expansion suffers from it too. Little has changed other than graphics, and the replacement of boats, bows, catapults and swords with biplanes, rifles, tanks, and bayonets. Only the biplane has a significant effect on the game, allowing the strafing of ground troops.

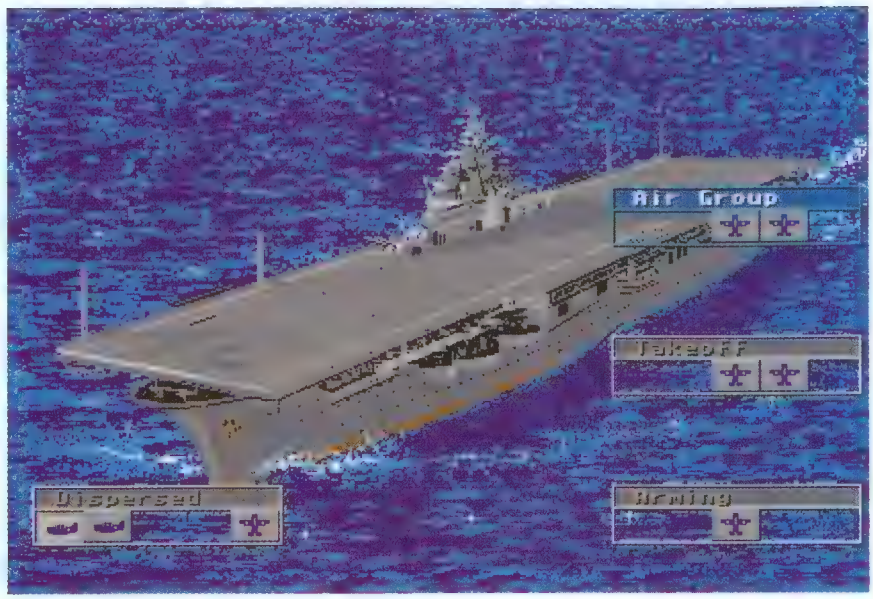
The use of radio to order other generals about, rather than the messenger pigeons of the original, is both insignificant (since the other generals are best ignored anyway) and strange (WWI radio was notoriously bad and the pigeons would have been *more* in keeping with the period).

The final point to make about **PM:WWI** is that it is a lousy simulation of WWI. There are no trenches and so no fronts. Attack is easy rather than suicidal (unlike the real thing) and the player must conquer the *whole* of (a rather badly drawn) Europe – starting in the Shetlands!

The review copy was for the Amiga and, unlike **Pop II's** sprite based graphics, consists of landscape views unsuitable for the machine's custom chips. This means that the slower raw speed of the Amiga makes the game seem annoyingly slow to someone who is used to the ST version of **Powermonger**, but I assume that this is not a programming fault. **Powermonger** does everything this expansion does; no better or worse.



The cost of **PM:WWI** is just not justified by new features. **Pop II**, on the other hand, is greatly expanded, even if on an old theme, and well worth a go for new players as well as old ones who do not mind wading through the starting levels. The editor is priced just right for what it is and may appeal most to people playing in two-player mode or to anyone who has finished the original conquest game. ❑



Design notes on Carriers at War, by SSG's Gregor Whiley

HIT THE DECK

Carriers at War is a game of fleet carrier battles in the Pacific from 1941–45. It was hugely successful when originally released on 8-bit machines, and we decided it was time to do a 16-bit version.

Carrier operations are inherently tense, uncertain and dangerous affairs, and the 8-bit version conveyed that excitement very well. That meant that we didn't have to change what the game was about, but we welcomed the chance to do it again, and do it even better.

We started by discarding everything from the 8-bit game except the basic idea. No original code remains. We wanted to take a very detailed approach to elements that were decided at a much higher level in the original game. Rather than accepting compromises that were forced on the 8-bit version, we decided to start from scratch. The following is a list of just a few of many things we have improved, in what was already a great game.

Ships

Ships now have a much more dynamic damage system. Bomb or torpedo hits cause damage and can start fires. Over time, fires can spread and can cause further damage. Damage control crews, however, can put out the fires.

A ship with good damage control could suffer quite a lot of fire damage but eventually be put more or less right. A ship with poor damage control could suffer only a few hits, but turn into an uncontrollable wreck.

Ships are also rated for vulnerability. Conceptually, a carrier is a large, essentially unarmoured ammunition store, with a nice flat deck for catching bombs. **CAW** won't let you forget this fact.

Planes

Operations can be reported in great detail. For instance, you could examine a squadron and be told that they were returning to base, that one was lost on take-off and two were damaged by flak and one shot down by CAP over the target. All combat is resolved on an individual plane basis.

Surface combat

We have designed sophisticated new tactical surface combat routines. If surface combat is possible, ships are placed into battle formations. You can order formations to open or close the range, and nominate targets for each weapon type in range. Combat occurs in a series of five-minute rounds.

We wanted to bring some tactical decision making to surface combat, even though it won't occur all that often. We also felt that anyone who fought a surface group to within gun range of a carrier task force deserved some reward for their enterprise.

Air to ship combat

An air strike flies to a sighting, and must locate the target before it can attack. Strikes will do their own searching if the target isn't where it should be. Escort fighters will attempt to engage the CAP, while the

bombers run the gauntlet of CAP plus light and heavy AA. These routines will produce a very accurate simulation of air/naval combat.

Combat reporting

Choosing the full combat reporting option delivers a blow by blow account of combat. A detailed graphical display shows the fate of each plane as it makes its attack run, and whether its ordnance hits or misses. Hits are shown by animated explosions on the ship, as are any fires or damage caused. This makes the combat sequence very exciting, as you follow the inevitable attrition on your aircraft, and await the result of each bomb or torpedo drop. Purists can turn this option off, and rely on the far less informative and less accurate after action reports.

Searching and sighting

The search routines will automatically launch sufficient planes to keep a plane on an outward search leg in each sector nominated by the player. Sighting reports are tagged with their age, and whether they are a fresh sighting or an update.

Sighting reports were subject to a great deal of inaccuracy, and we have deliberately designed in a misinformation factor. It is up to the player to sift through the reports and form his own opinion as to what is actually happening. You can also call up a report on exactly where all your search planes are.

Game control

Carriers at War was designed from the ground up to be mouse controlled, although there is a keyboard option. The system is designed so that it is easy to move laterally, giving the same order to different groups, without having to move up and down menu hierarchies.

Status and history

We have included a great deal of detail in the game. Each ship and plane class has its own picture, which can be called up at any time. Each individual ship has its own history, such as when it was launched and its final fate, plus a wealth of details on dimensions, weight, armament, armour, speed and so on. If you are looking at ship status, the picture will show any damage accumulated in the scenario so far.

Graphics

We have concentrated very strongly on the graphical look of the game. On the IBM, we have used a high-res VGA mode with a variable palette of 16 out of 262,144 colours. EGA users are stuck with their fixed 16 colour palette. Having an editable palette greatly enhances the graphical effect we were able to achieve.

Scenario editor

With **CAW**, we have decided to make the scenario editor a separate item for reasons of price, quality and time. To bundle all the editor material in with the already huge size of the main game would push the price to unacceptable levels. It would also further delay the release of an already long-awaited game.

Produced as a separate item, a scenario editor can be a polished and professional piece of work, which only those people who really want it have to pay for. The editor itself will be a fairly massive undertaking, as an explanation of just one section of it will show.

War room

The main reason for **CAW** taking as long as it has is the work we have put into the brand new war room module. War room is the ultimate AI system for wargames, and is the culmination of SSG's experience in AI systems for strategy games. Instead of trying to hardwire a series of rules for computer players that will be valid for all scenarios, war room takes that decision making and gives it all to the scenario creator. Now each scenario comes with a series of infinitely flexible plans for the computer player.

The problem with most AI schemes is that they produce a predictable response from the computer player. After a few games, players know what to expect. War room solves this problem. A few examples from the Coral Sea scenario will illustrate what can happen.

The transport fleet invading Port Moresby used to sail a fixed route at a known time. Now we could simply delay its start time by a few days. Or it could take a zig-zag path through the Solomon Sea. The Japanese carriers used to sail more or less straight for the middle of the Coral Sea. Now, they could precede the transport group, or escort it closely, or make a high speed dash for the Louisiade Archipelago. US admirals who simply turn up of the end of New Guinea on day three could be in for a very nasty surprise.

It is hard to describe the range of options war room affords to us as scenario designers. Task forces (TFs) can be ordered to proceed in an innocuous-looking direction at a leisurely pace for the benefit of search planes during the day, then turn around for a high speed run during the night. Each TF action can have a probability assigned to it, so that the fact that a player has observed actions A and B does not allow him to infer that action C will follow.

The creator can set, and change at any time, all the decision making processes of a TF. These include where to search, what CAP to fly, what sort of targets to strike and which to ignore, special areas for attention, no go zones, speeds and basic TF missions.

These are exactly the sort of decisions a real admiral has to make. So much so that now, when you play **CAW**, you won't just be playing against the computer, you'll be playing against us. We look forward to the battle. ❑

***Carriers at War** should be released by SSG for the PC in April.*

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Uncharted Waters

Sail of the century

By Steven Wartofsky

Uncharted Waters bills itself as the first game in Koei's new 'ReKoeition' series, a departure from the game design and style the company has grown perhaps too well known for in the past.

Although the game clearly makes use of many of the components present in Koei's earlier designs, it nevertheless incorporates them into some significant innovations, all of which are particularly suited for the 16th-century pirating/seafaring history behind this involving strategy game. The game features a host of situations which a 16th-century Portuguese captain might find himself in, and extends the role-playing and adventuring elements with reliance on varied and interesting conversations with the denizens of various ports, chock full of tips and hints about trade and treasure.

Beep beep

It should be noted up front that even from the most conservative standpoint **Uncharted Waters** is a bit behind the times in the updating of its sound and graphics. The screen layout, the use of EGA and CGA at a time when virtually everyone else has long ago moved towards 256-colour VGA, an artwork style which is consistent with that found in previous Koei games, the cartridge-game beep-beep quality of the music, are all evidence that the energies behind this new game have all been spent elsewhere.

Despite problems with the decorative design, taken entirely on its own terms **Uncharted Waters** represents the full attention to detail in the design characteristic of Koei's best work. The story begins in Lisbon in 1502; the player is a 16-year-old boy whose family fortune has met with a number of serious reverses, but who is still intent on making a name for himself.

More importantly, there's this lovely little thing living in the King of Portugal's court who's eagerly following the boy's progress through the world (she's only 14 but she's got a great smile), and who seems willing to wait a lonely 20 years for her hero to come home from his travels and marry (life sure was tough back then, eh?). The king must be impressed with the hero's accomplishments first, of course, before he'll let princess out of her room.

Along with his father's old first mate, the hero wanders around Lisbon to avail himself of the various services of the port (so much for the princess...). Lisbon in 1502 consists of a church, a guild, the king's palace, a lodge, a marketplace, a pub, a shipyard and a harbour – all that any seafaring soul could ever want.

The marketplace allows trade in goods and cargo (import/export trade balances are a factor in the economics of the game), as well as investment when in other ports to increase overseas support for Portugal. The pub is a source of news, information and mates for the long journey outward, and if the player is in need of a break from the arduousness of sea-

Published by
Koei

Designed by
'Kou Shibusawa'

Systems
IBM PC

PC graphics
EGA, CGA

Supports
Adlib sound board; mouse, keyboard

Notes
Hard drive recommended

faring, provides poker and blackjack (did they play those in 16th-century Lisbon?) for a little moment's diversion (or a gambling off of the whole fortune).

The guild contains all sorts of interesting tools of the trade, which serve as power-ups for the player's ability to see and shoot further, map out territory within the game, and increase strength for battle (these tools add significantly to the role-playing element of the game).

The lodge provides information about the port, as well as a summary of the progress of other ships later purchased and sent on missions for the player's advancement, once a fleet has been developed.

The shipyard provides the means to improve and repair the ships, as well as refurbish them with better guns. The harbour finally allows for restocking the ship prior to departure, and is of course the starting-point for any voyage undertaken.

Bless you

Whoops! Forgot the church! Oh well, it doesn't do much – it serves as the place to either save or quit the game. I'd hoped for a blessing for the first act and maybe a quick stab to the heart for the second in the animations.

Once out of town and on the open seas the player has access to a number of instruments which indicate course, wind, current and time across the left-hand side of the screen.

Sea currents as much as winds push the player around as he attempts to navigate a reasonable course, and the odd typhoon appears from time to time as well. Other fleets are encountered and can be surveyed to gain information and tips on good routes of navigation, ports, etc. Supplies last only so long, and crew will up and die if not taken good care of.

Foreign ports serve as the equivalent of the player's allies present in other Koei games, and their allegiance must be purchased with 'investment' in their well-being. With increased allegiance comes increased wealth and power, and increased chances the player will be called before the king's notice. As with other Koei games, play involves managing the balance between allegiance-mongering, seafaring battle, services rendered and gold accumulated through trade to achieve success; **Uncharted Waters** proves as engrossing as any of the previous releases on this front, providing a characteristically wide enough range of choices at any point to keep the player guessing.

Sea war is the same simple hex-based turn-based tactical game present in all Koei releases; the difference is that winds and oceanic obstructions (coral reefs, islands, sand bars and so on) serve the equivalent purpose of different terrain types in the land-based games.

There are no cities to attack or protect, only other fleets, the enemy fleet's flagship serving as the primary goal for an attack. Victory results in the usual plunder, including a few baubles for the princess should she have stayed out of the pub long enough to still be waiting.

The simplicity of this portion of the game provides for some real fun, as the challenge behind carefully manoeuvring your fleet into position for an attack (which can involve spying on enemy ships, heading into them from upwind, sneaking up on them at night to prepare for an early morning boarding, among other options) is balanced nicely against trading cannon-fire and making a swashbuckling leap after riches at the right moment. The tactical situation, in other words, is significantly revised to reflect the kinds of conditions and choices likely to be present in a historic sea battle.

Finally, and most interestingly, **Uncharted Waters** includes a wide range of 16th-century ships to purchase or build: caravels, latins, redondas, bergantins, naos, carracks and galleons are available for acquisition, and depending on the ship the player can add on various numbers of masts, artillery pieces, and choose which types of woods to use to construct his ideal ship. The ships have different strengths and weaknesses, of course, and also different hull depths.

Producing the right ship for the right purposes becomes the most intriguing aspect of the game design, and serves as the one innovation that stands out.

Uncharted Waters will function in black-and-white in CGA mode, making it a possible candidate for play on portable computer systems. It is easily playable via either mouse or keyboard, and the included documentation provides a number of charts making the game command structure easy to access and understand during play. The documentation is nowhere near as complete or glossy as has been the case with previous Koei releases, by the way; the included stories and historical information about 16th-century seafaring trade, piracy and so on is quite limited, though accurate enough in what is provided.

Well developed

For anyone who has never played a Koei game, definitely try **Uncharted Waters**. It is a well-developed strategy game that will provide extensive and varied game play.

To anyone who has played **Romance of the Three Kingdoms** or **Bandit Kings of Ancient China**, there may be some elements which look familiar at the outset, but be assured that they have all been put to very appropriate and interesting use to reflect the differences between struggling to gain ascendancy in historical China, and going after treasure and power as the captain of a man o' war. ❑

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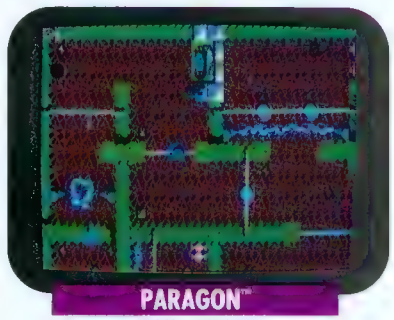

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Capablanca or wood-pusher?

By Richard Parker

'The finest chess program in the world,' proclaims the modest banner on the box housing **Chessmaster 3000**, latest offering from the Software Toolworks. Well, let's see.

The program is supplied with a user guide, manual, and quick reference sheet. The guide is well organized and covers the essentials, while the lucidly written 70-page manual, marred only by a tendency to permutate king and queen symbols on the diagrams, includes a rule summary, potted histories of the game and chess machines, and a section on the 'classic' games library.

WIMP interface

The tests on which this review is based were carried out on a 386 PC with VGA graphics adapter, running at 20MHz with 4Mb of expanded memory. Following the straightforward installation the program takes up just over 1.5Mb of hard disk.

Once running, all options are accessible from a WIMP interface. Mouse handling is sufficiently clean to be preferable to text mode (joysticks are also supported). Interaction is natural, with no obvious lapses on the error checking front. Look and feel aspects, such as choice of piece styles, notation and 2D or 3D effect, may be changed easily during a game.

Strict rules

All the standard features are supported: **Chessmaster** can play itself or a human opponent, make suggestions and display the state of its analysis; moves may be taken back successively (except in championship mode, where the rules are stricter!).

Whole games, including 150 annotated classics, can be replayed at a variety of real-time speeds; games and positions may be saved (sealed moves are supported). Communication with external databases is provided.

Anyone finding ordinary chess too easy may try the blindfold version. The program does not have a learning capability (this is still difficult to implement well).

Various personalities, such as capablanca-style and wood-pusher are provided, and new ones may be created by changing style attributes such as the emphasis on positional factors. This is an interesting feature, although I would have would have liked deeper access to the evaluation mechanism; perhaps this would have been giving away to many secrets! Automated round-robin tournaments (with or without human participation) may be run.

Full instruction

A highlight is the comprehensive interactive tutorial. Careful study should give the beginner a fair grounding, and playing the role of **Chessmaster**'s apprentice could be instructive for players up to county standard.

This is backed up by teaching modes of play in which possible moves and threats are shown on the board, and a 'rate your play' facility.

The range of time limits should cater for all needs. Included are: x minutes for the game, equal time (**Chessmaster** tries to match its opponent's average response time) and x moves in y minutes. When the opening library (said to encompass more than 150 000 positions) is in use, response is almost instantaneous.

Search strategy

Chessmaster can be forced to move at any stage in its analysis. It is worth noting that the move is usually fairly good, which suggests a reasonably intelligent search strategy, possibly akin to the 'progressive deepening' approach commonly used by human players, instead of (or as a refinement of) the more traditional Min-Max tree search with pruning.

Chessmaster can be made to play as a novice, expert or anywhere in between. The strengths and weaknesses of the program reflect those of

Designed by
The Software Toolworks

Published by
The Software Toolworks

Systems
IBM PC; Amiga and Mac planned

PC graphics
CGA, EGA, VGA, Hercules

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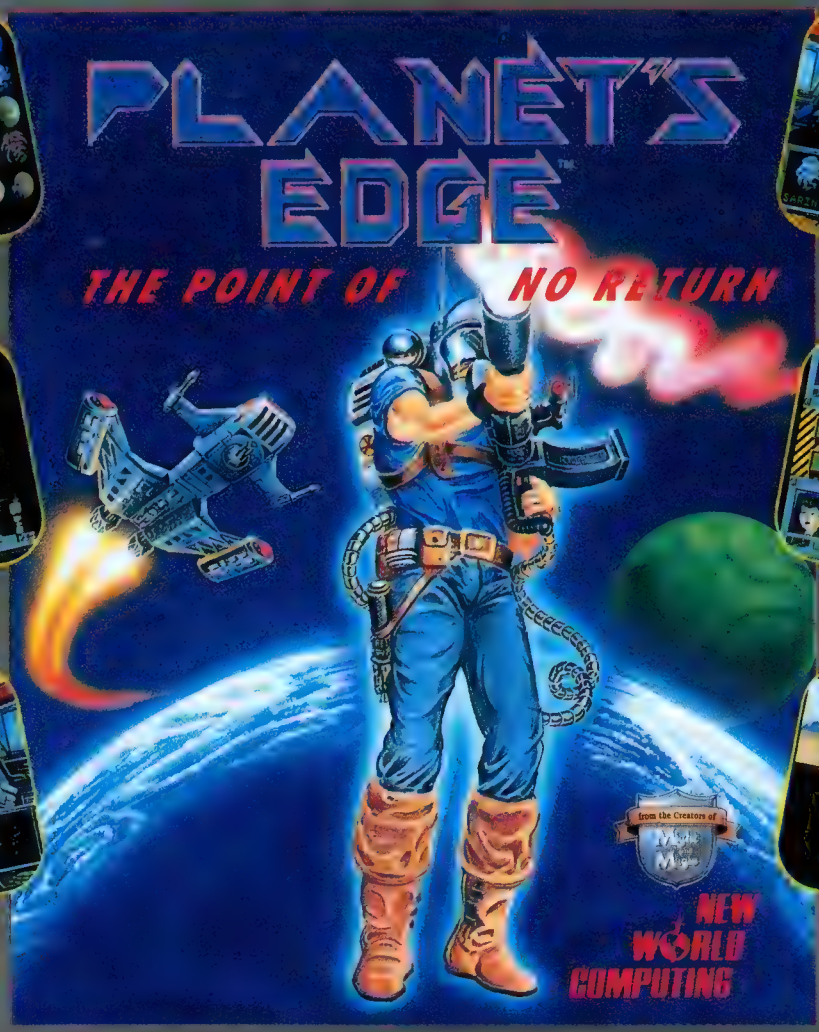
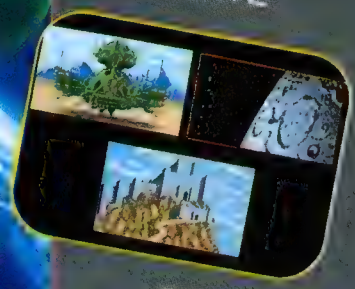
DESIGN

CHALLENGE



INTERACT

SOLVE



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Reader Service No. 5

most other chess systems. Tactically it is very good. For instance, at five seconds a move, it found a famous queen sacrifice on an empty square attacked by four pieces, and the move leading to it.This move was one a grand master would have been proud of, and forced me to give the monitor a polite bow.

Strategic value

Historically, the impoverished strategic capability of computerized chess systems has tended to detract from their appeal. A game without tactics may resemble a book lacking wit, but a game without strategy is like a novel with no plot. The implementation of strategic planning depends largely on the capture and formalization of human expert knowledge (rather than brute-force searching), which has always been a difficult topic.

Chessmaster gives no impression of executing long-term strategies, but it does seem capable of stringing moves together coherently, and takes due account of positional factors.

End game play, however, is rather weak. For instance, the emphasis placed, in the tutorial, on the strength of bishops against knights in open positions does not seem to be reflected sufficiently in the program's evaluation mechanism. I noted also that the subtleties of checkmating with king, bishop and knight are outside the scope of its programming.

Chessmaster plays speed chess well, often winning five-minute games (to put this in context, I could be described as fairly strong at local league level; BCF around 160).

Test of champions

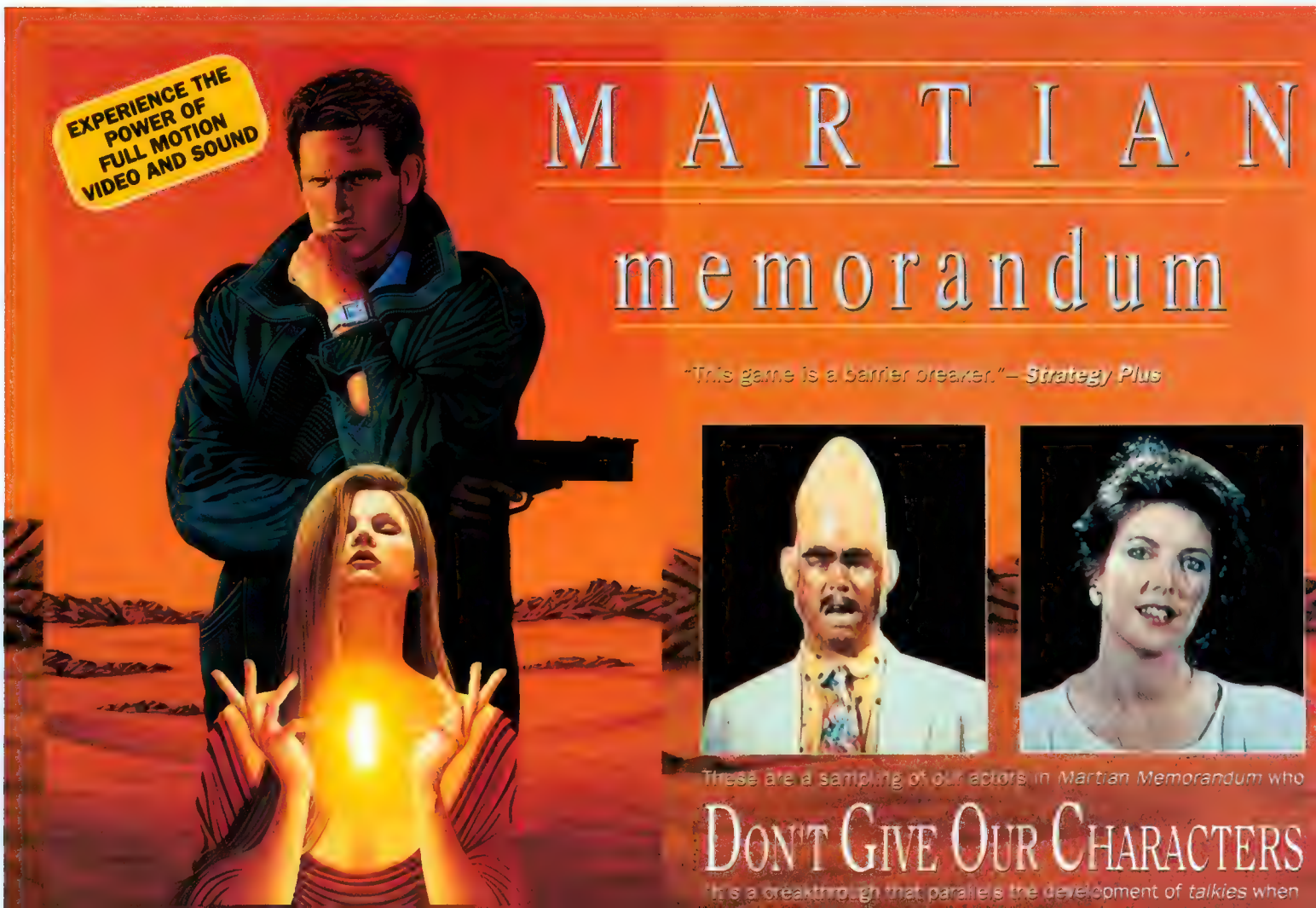
In championship mode it also makes a worthy opponent. It is by no means unbeatable if one keeps the position solid and builds up the attack slowly, but tactical unawareness is punished severely.

Pitted against a series of tests in a specialist magazine, **Chessmaster** rated as a strong club player. Taking into account the program's displayed performance in various aspects of the game, I would place it in the range 150 to 175 BCF, or up to 2000 ELO (Expert Rating).

User friendly

While no computerized chess system can fully replace the social benefits of the local club, a user-friendly program able to play reasonably competent chess can offer a very satisfying opponent for most casual players, and a useful training device for the more serious competitor.

Chessmaster certainly meets these criteria, and is well endowed with features, including valuable learning aids for the complete beginner. With regard to it being the finest chess program in the world, I reserve judgment; nevertheless, any aspiring novice or experienced amateur considering purchasing a chess program would be well advised to investigate **Chessmaster 3000**. ❑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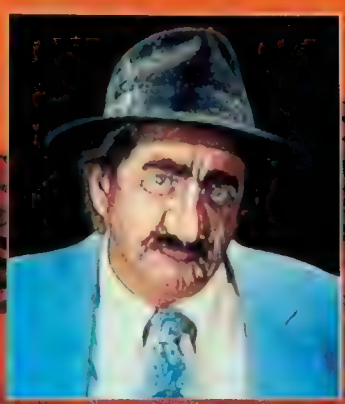

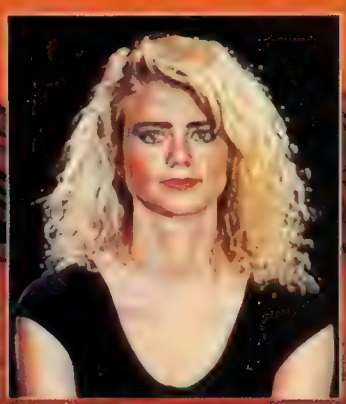

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INTERNATIONAL READER AWARDS

Top role: Bane of the Cosmic Forge (above left).

Sporting champion: Links (above right)

The people have spoken! Yes, it's the *Strategy Plus* awards for 1991. There are no real surprises, but a few close run things. **Powermonger** ran **Warlords** right to the wire, a pretty good achievement considering it's still not available for the PC. Sierra dominated the adventure genre claiming both the winner and runner-up in King's Quest V.

The real neck and neck struggle was the RPG section where **Wizardry 6: Bane of the Cosmic Forge** just pipped **Eye of the Beholder**. Expect the sequels to these two games to continue the battle.

Links had little competition in the sports section, while the wargames category produced the most controversial winner in **UMS II**.

The undisputed winner was **Bane of the Cosmic Forge** – no big surprise here as it probably sold more on import in the UK than did many indigenous products.

A big thank you to the many readers around the world who took the time to participate in this poll. ❑

Best Strategy Game
Warlords (SSG)

Best Wargame
UMS II (Microprose)

Best Adventure Game
Space Quest IV (Sierra On Line)

Best Role-Playing Game
Wizardry 6: Bane of the Cosmic Forge (Sir-Tech)

Best Simulation
Red Baron (Dynamix/Sierra)

Best Sports Game
Links (Access)

Best Game of 1991
Wizardry 6: Bane of the Cosmic Forge
1990 winner: Railroad Tycoon (Microprose)

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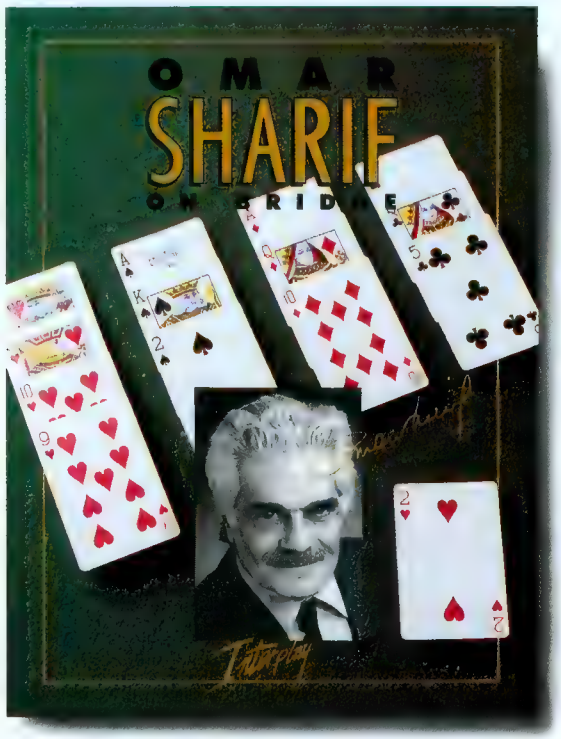

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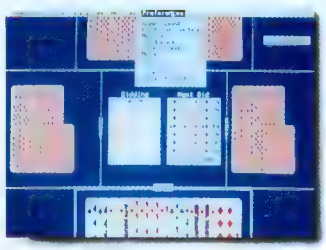

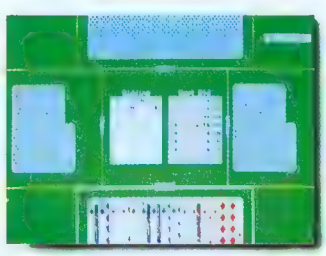

MS-DOS Screens Pictured.

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Monkey Island 2

LeChuck's Revenge

By Ian Marsh

Adventure games seem to have changed little since the early Scott Adams text adventures for the TRS-80, which says quite a lot about the genre. Admittedly the graphics have improved beyond recognition – although it's not difficult to improve on absolutely none – but the essence of the adventure game is still a sequence of mind-bending puzzles that are enough to make the average computer gamer vigorously head-butt the nearest wall.

Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge is no exception to this rule. It's a game that brings on an impulse to wipe the hard disk of every element of its being, such is the frustration that it induces. The game will reduce many gamers to quivering, nervous wrecks; it will give the impression that the player has an antlike intelligence compared with that of the writer; it may even imbue the player with a strong liking for Barry Manilow records.

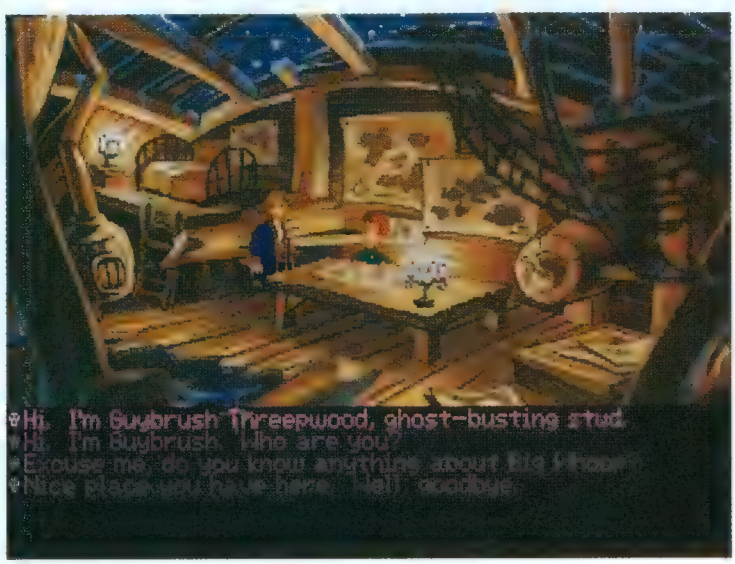
None of this looks good, let alone anything like a recommendation, but herein lies the fascination of adventure games: many people would feel plain cheated if they could simply walk through them.

I will cheerfully admit that I detest the feeling of being balked by a mere computer game, when there is seemingly only a limited way of achieving an objective. It's why I prefer pencil-and-paper role-playing games, where there is truly more than one way to succeed because the referee can adapt to the players' approach. **Monkey Island 2** has already stretched my patience to the limits, but I feel strangely attracted to the idea of completing it, for the simple reason that the satisfaction of solving a puzzle compensates for the amount of mental torture involved. Part of this must also be attributed to the absorbing nature of the story and its setting.

Monkey Island 2 sees Guybrush Threepwood yet again confronting the ghost pirate LeChuck and his henchman Largo LaGrande while on the trail of the great treasure of Big Whoop. His adventure is divided into episodes, each with a specific objective, and each requiring clues and key objects to be successfully completed.

As usual, the secret of success seems to be to pick up anything that isn't nailed down, from string to swamp mud, and to observe every little visual detail of the scenes presented on screen. Objects need to be used in combination at times in order to snare other objects or to advance the plot.

Instead of using a complicated parser, however, the game uses a set of verbal icons in conjunction with objects in Guybrush's inventory or fixed objects in a scene to issue commands. The default verbal command, for instance, is 'walk to': pointing at a destination on the screen will prompt Guybrush to follow orders, such as walk to door, walk to ship and so on. The 'use' icon can be combined with an object, such as in the command



Published by
Lucasfilm Games

UK distributor
US Gold

Systems
IBM PC

PC graphics
256-colour VGA, MCGA

Supports
Adlib, Roland, Sound Blaster and Soundmaster II sound cards; keyboard, mouse and joystick

'use bucket', or more complicated commands such as 'use bucket with swamp'. That way all the player has to do is guess the intent of the programme rather than the exact word order that is required.

Similarly, conversations are carried out through selecting the 'talk to' icon and then pointing at and clicking on the appropriate person. Conversations are then simply a matter of multiple choice clicks on questions and wisecracks.

The effect is similar to that used in Dynamix's **Heart of China**, but there are fewer penalties: in fact, whatever response is made still seems to leave the player's options open, rather than pushing the player into a dead end. The greater choice of verbs and items, however, makes **Monkey Island 2** more of a challenge – it's as great a difference as that between cracking a three-barrel combination lock and a five-barrel one.

There are tricky elements in the adventure, however, that seem a little too hard, where real-time action is needed to grab an object or to tackle a baddie. It took me several attempts, for example, to obtain a monocle, and at least two stabs to work my voodoo magic on Largo LaGrande. In a way it felt as if the game interface was suddenly working against me by turning into arcade action rather than keeping the traditional approach of an adventure game, and if there's one thing that really turns me off adventure games it's arcade sequences.

The game interface, however, is generally easy to use, and the pictorial elements really help to create the right atmosphere. Detail is lost as far as the physiognomy of characters go, making the adventure a little too cartoony, but the careful blending of useful objects with background scenery hides the fact that the player needs to investigate them, all of which serves as a reminder to take note of even minor details in a scene.

Monkey Island 2 is charming, visually appealing and immensely frustrating. In short, it's a great adventure game. ❑

Getting down to monkey business

Part 1 – The Largo Embargo

Need a shovel? It's in plain view in Woodtick, although the cursor does not (initially) interact with it.

There are two entrances to the Bloody Lip's kitchen.

LaGrande has no clothes deposited with Mad Marty so there's no laundry ticket to be found. You can stop searching! In game terms, Largo only has the clothes he's wearing, so if they were to get dirty. By the way, did you notice the dodgy door in his room?

Having trouble finding an 'eye that has seen the world'? Didn't someone else mention 'seeing the world'?

Need money? The cook's job at the Bloody Lip pays a week's wages in advance. Pity the incumbent hasn't been fired for putting rodent hairs in the vichyssoise.

Part 2 – Four Map Pieces

Read the wanted poster on Phatt Island regularly! (This doesn't help, but it is exceedingly funny.)

Can't get a ticket to the Mardi Gras? Perhaps you could win one in a haven of gambling.

Broken oar? Who could repair that?

Trouble with a pesky seagull? Actually, the bird is not the problem; identifying which map piece is the one needed is the difficulty. If only Guybrush could sniff it out.

Note JoJo's fascination with the metronome. If the metronome was even more fascinating, perhaps he'd stop playing.

The woodsmith has hammer and nails which Guybrush could pinch if the woodsmith was to leave his shop. Look around there to get some idea of the sorts of things that the woodsmith specializes in. Now, if he was to be called away on an emergency, say to perform 'tree' surgery.

Three things are required to win the Spitting Contest. First, Guybrush needs proper 'ammunition' (remember Largo's massive spurt in part 1? Shame you can't remember what he was drinking!). Second, he should hawk when the wind is just right (watch the screen). Third, like all good pirates, Guybrush should cheat a little. The plaque for the winner could be quite valuable too; it's made of bronze, after all. Before he can get the crypt key from Stan, Guybrush has to shut him up.

The problem with the book at Governor's Phatt's is simply a matter of weight. If the weight of the book is *removed* from the bed, the governor will wake up.

To win the drinking contest, Guybrush needs some near-grog. Captain Kate has the only known supply and she won't part with it. If only there was some way to separate Kate from her belongings. Wait a minute – that happened to Guybrush, didn't it?

To turn off the pump that operates the waterfall, Guybrush needs a wrench. A special sort of wrench.

Part 3 – LeChuck's Fortress

Don't you wish that Guybrush had written down the dream sequence dance like he said he would? Perhaps he did – check your inventory.

Part 4 – Dinky Island

Guybrush needs to open the bag, not get it down.

To use the elevator, Guybrush needs to find some way of making himself lighter. The elevator doesn't go anywhere though – it's just there so that Guybrush can close its doors.

LeChuck's underpants are the thread! Try leaving the dime on the floor.

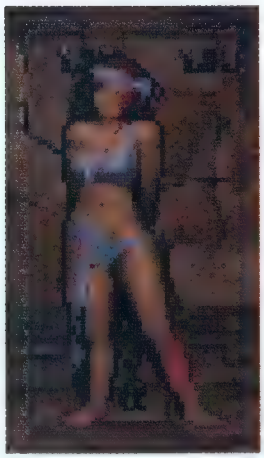
To get the 'body', Guybrush will find that an unwanted gift comes in quite handy.

Tips supplied by Phillip Murphy

Eye of the Beholder II

The Legend of Darkmoon

By Sandy Eisen



Designed by
Westwood Associates

Published by
SSI

UK distributor
US Gold

Systems
IBM PC; Amiga to follow

PC graphics
256-colour VGA

Supports
Adlib, Sound Blaster

Eye of the Beholder was the first fantasy role-playing computer adventure from Strategic Simulations Inc to use the 'party perspective' or 'you-are-there' interface which had been introduced by FTL's **Dungeonmaster** on the Atari ST in 1988. **Dungeonmaster** for the IBM PC is due out next Christmas, and has been for several years.

When the original **Eye of the Beholder** (**EOB**) appeared it was the first IBM PC format game to present computer adventuring with this highly effective viewpoint. In the short time since then several other games have used variants of this system, although purists may argue that none, including **EOB**, have surpassed the original **Dungeonmaster** interface for ease of use.

Nevertheless **EOB** was first on the PC; it used the popular **Dungeons & Dragons** rules as a framework and was an excellent game. Not surprisingly it was a big seller for SSI and a sequel has followed relatively promptly.

Game sequels do not have a great reputation, even when the original does. FTL mishandled **Chaos Strikes Back**, the follow-on to **Dungeonmaster**. Although this did include innovations such as a picture editor and on-disk hints, the basic game system did not evolve at all, nor did the dungeon to be explored differ much from the original. The fatal error was to make the second game so challenging as to be virtually unplayable by anyone who had not learned the system on the gradually progressing original.

Avoiding traps

Westwood Associates, the programmer and developer of **EOB2**, has avoided all these traps. I suspect that its brief from SSI was to produce a game that could not only allow a player of the original **EOB** to transfer his party and continue to progress, but which would also let newcomers to the system to make a fresh start.

This is quite a tall order, and before seeing **EOB2** I would have been sceptical. Having played the game, and having tried out both methods of starting, I can confirm that these objectives have been achieved.

The game installs from two 1.2Mb 5.25in floppies (3.5in disks are available), and occupies only about 2.7Mb of hard disk space. Considering that the graphics and sound standards are excellent, this demonstrates impressive programming skill and economy compared with other recent games.

No digitized speech is used, but otherwise everything is state of the art: 256-colour VGA, effective sound effects are created using standard sound boards, and mouse support is well implemented. The game can also be played using keyboard alone.

Work of art

Game introductions are almost a miniature art-form in themselves. The original intro to **EOB** was one of the best I have seen, and almost set new graphical standards. Aficionados of such trivia will be glad to hear that the artistic quality of the **EOB2** introduction surpasses the original.

Party generation offers a full range of races and professions. Rather than offering the third level characters that start in the first game, both the quick start and the creation routine produce parties of about sixth level. The scope of the game seems to be about character levels 6 to 12.

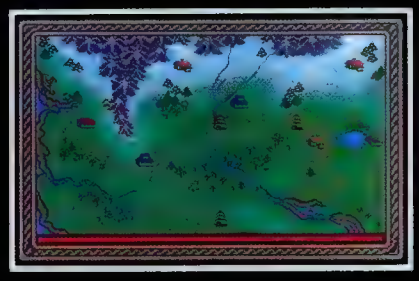
By copying a saved game file from **EOB** into the new directory, players of the first game have the option of continuing with their previous party.

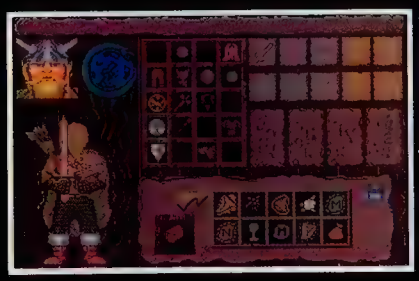
Irrelevant and unbalancing items are removed by the program as it performs the transfer. I found that most if not all of my really useful equipment (magic swords, wands and so on) was still available. Perhaps this was because I never found the best equipment in the original? A quick start party is available, for players who cannot be bothered with character generation.

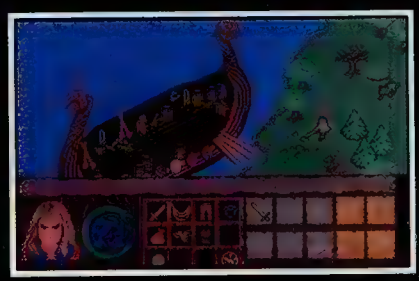
For once the hype seems to be true, and this sums up **EOB2** in a nutshell. Had I been hired to oversee the marketing I would have also emphasised an additional improvement over the original; the world of **EOB2**

Dusk of the Gods

ENTER THE HALLS OF VAHALLA...







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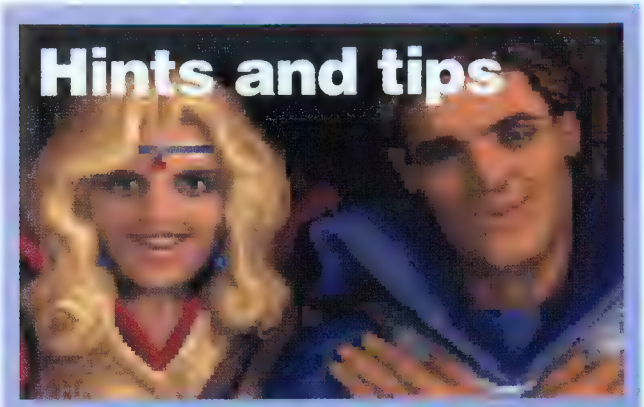
Reader Service No. 50

Hints and tips



The adventure starts in the forest. This is really quite a small area with little of interest. There seems to be no point in not entering Temple Darkmoon as soon as you have found it. If someone offers to show you the way there, accept.

The priests in the entrance hall will not let you proceed further, and if their warnings are not heeded they will attack. Once this happens exit from the temple is no longer possible.

Assuming the first priests have been defeated or outrun, the choice is then up or down the stairs. Upstairs leads to cloisters and rooms patrolled by more angry priests. This area is probably best left for later.

Downstairs leads to catacombs which are also under priestly control for the first few levels. Several non-player characters will be encountered here. They may offer to join the party, but do not assume that all will turn out to be of long-term benefit.

In an area where the walls are cracked and unstable it is possible to break through a wall to reveal stairs down to even deeper levels of the catacombs. This area is no longer under the priests control, but plenty of other monsters make up for this. The deeper levels must be searched to complete a set of four artefacts. This task is made particularly tense and hazardous since it is impossible either to rest or to return to previously explored areas by a known route.

Once this quest has been accomplished it is possible to use the four artefacts to open up from the original entrance hall an entire new area of towers.

Several places in the game are so tough that new gamers will surely give up and some veterans will toss in the shield too. The first of these horror shows occurs when a legion of skeletal warriors pour out of the last room on a level, seemingly in endless waves and seemingly invincible. The key to winning this one – the turn undead spell and fleet feet.

Shortly after the skeletal warriors the gamer will face a multi-layer killer level where no rest is permitted and monsters abound. Potions, scrolls, and lots of food will be the party's salvation on these levels.

Then there are the beholders, which are magic resistant and have high hit points, but they are clumsy. Ambush, smack and move, smack and move, smack and move – the beholder two-step is the way to win these battles. In **Eye of the Beholder** there was one beholder to worry about; in **EOB II** there are what feels like hundreds of them. Once the beholder two step is learned, they become beatable, but this takes a lot of patience and many deaths in the party.

Just before the final confrontation with the ultimate bad guys, the party will get an opportunity to face an endless supply of mind flayers. When this opportunity knocks, reject it! Take this sage advice in **EOB II**: some of the battles are truly no-win set-ups and should be avoided.

seems a little more organized, coherent and real.

Despite pretensions to be otherwise, **EOB** was basically one big dungeon with a big chief monster lurking on its deepest level. The plot devices and characters which one met, although to be welcomed as a tremendous advance and addition to the basic elements of puzzle-solving and hack and slash, never really seemed to fulfil their promise or to allow any real role-playing.

Based on limited playing of the sequel, my impression is that much greater thought and care has been lavished on organization and characters.

The storyline involves investigation of nefarious deeds happening in a certain Darkmoon Temple. The party starts in a forest nearby. The atmosphere of each distinct area is very effectively evoked; forest, temple and catacombs beneath the temple have their own structure and characters.

Although I cannot say that the role-playing is significantly better, the sense of presence, excitement and of unravelling a mystery (albeit along a mostly predetermined pathway) are greatly improved.

Screens with a graphic, music and short text are triggered at predetermined points. Although these are really no different from the screens that accompany meetings with non-player characters, but without any choice option, they occur more frequently than the equivalent in **EOB** and add to the suspense and atmosphere. The game system and interface are essentially the same as the original. Five separate game-save positions are now allowed rather than only one.

The spellcasting routine has been improved so that spellbooks can be preset to open at a specific page (level). This allows spells to be used more quickly in combat. The real changes are in the different environments to be explored and the (mostly) new monsters. Many are now human because parts of the action are against organized opposition.

A very slight and gentle evolution of the system is all that has taken place. But combined with the both improved and different story, the result is a game which can be recommended both to those who enjoyed the original and to newcomers looking for a real-time perspective-view role-playing game.

Cautious note

The only note of caution I would sound is for the future. So far there is not much competition around, but several developers have nearly completed similar games inspired by **Dungeonmaster**. SSI must not rest on its laurels and simply churn out a succession of **EOB** clones. I would think that two or three is all the system should be expected to take, and that serious development of a revolutionary (not evolutionary) successor that takes advantage of CD ROM should have already started. If SSI is not far-sighted enough to do this, then others will be. ❑

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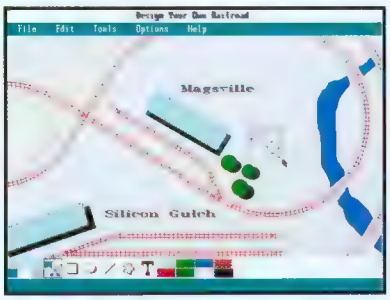

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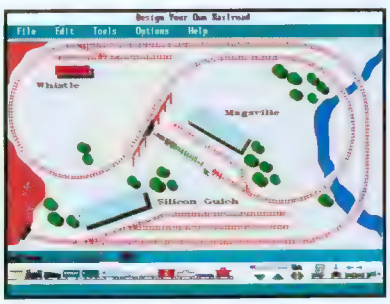

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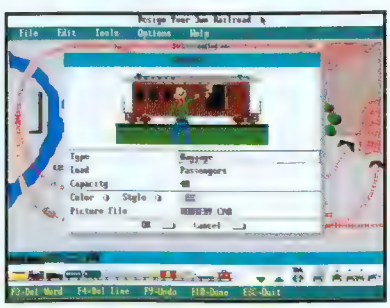

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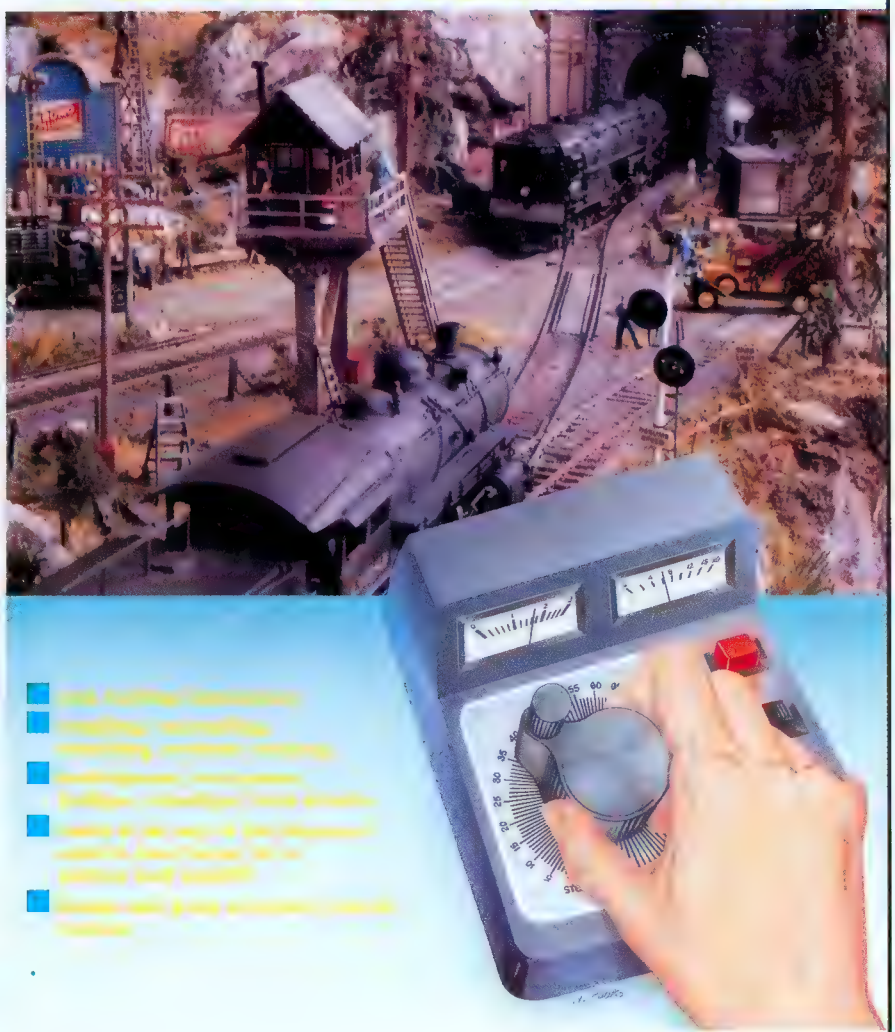

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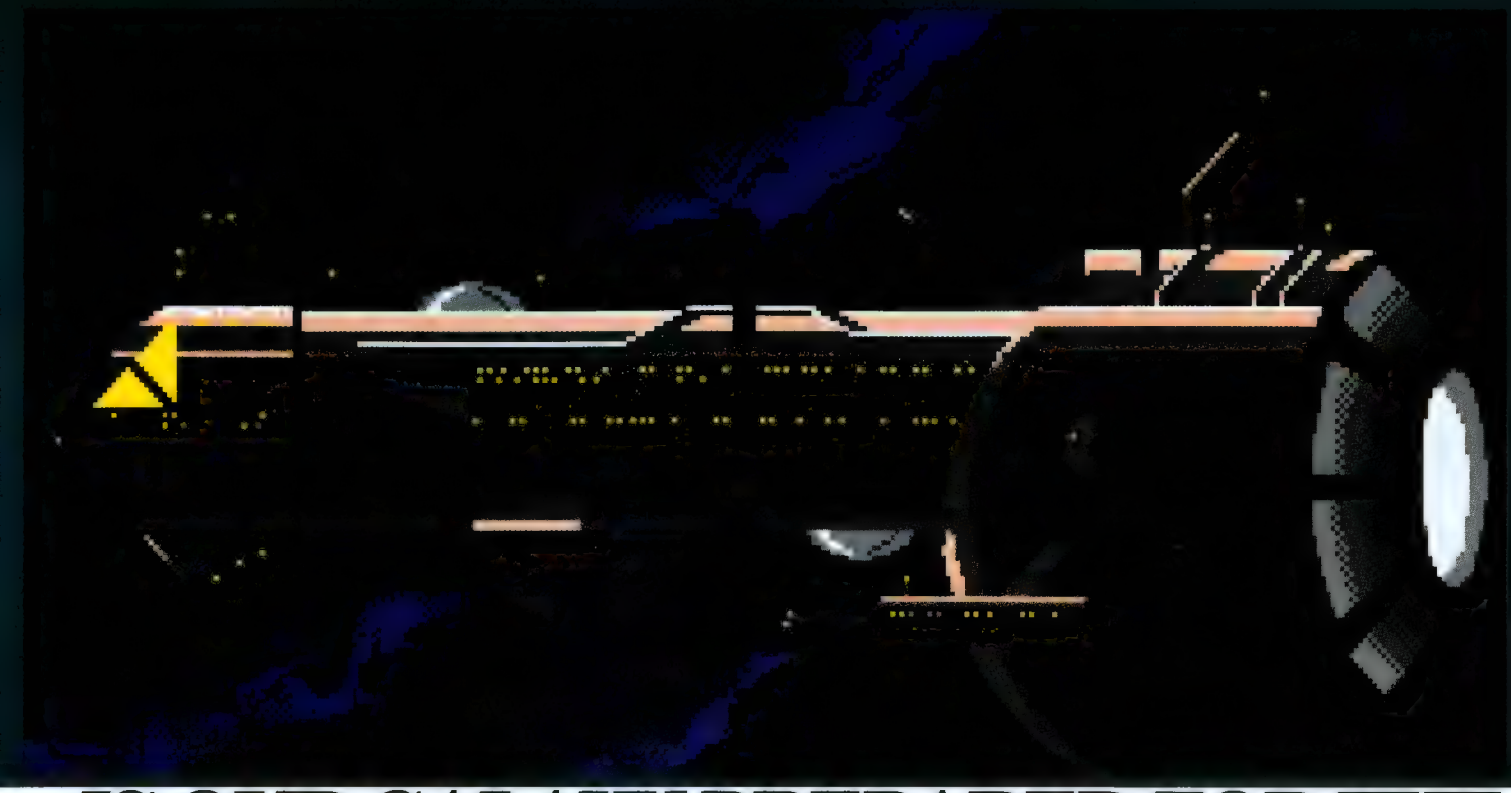

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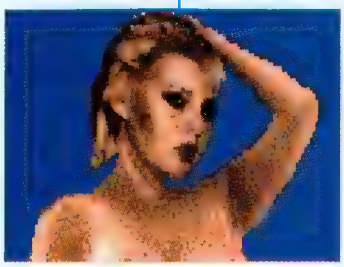

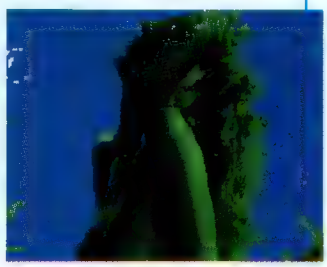

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Reader Service No. 35

Birds of Prey

Nothing but blue skies

By Paul Rigby

Well, it's finally here. After years of waiting, constant news and rumours of subject and plot changes and several bookies making a fortune on bets for the latest name change – **Birds of Prey** is on the streets, in a box complete with price tag.

First released on the Amiga (the PC versionis on the way) **Birds of Prey** (BOP) appears impressive at first glance: nice box, thick manual and two floppy disks. However, 'tis an illusion. One disk is merely a short, but very impressive, demo.

Woolly lining

The manual is a sheep in wolf's clothing. It desperately needs an index and while the tutorial is welcome, frustration mounts with the lack of any worthwhile explanation to the simulation's mechanics and the selling point of the whole game – the campaign.

BOP offers the player the chance to take command of an airforce (modelled upon the Eastern and Western blocs, although the game refers to sides A and B) and pit it against the opposition. To succeed one must undertake a variety of different mission types using a multitude of aircraft, 40 to be exact. They include ground attack, transports, air superiority, reconnaissance and so on.

Unfortunately, though, the above philosophy is taken to its limit as other units cannot be ordered (ground or air) to attempt missions of their own. Only the player can perform missions – everyone else just tags along under computer-run AI.

The campaign area is dynamic, so that damaged objects are repaired, other aircraft are seen in the sky (the player's, wingmen and the opposition) giving a welcome atmosphere to the occasion.

Ground forces are encountered, aircraft carriers wallow off the coast, air refuelling is possible – the whole game presents a 'busy' feel. A good point in favour of **BOP**, this is the way all simulations are heading. Gone is the Falcon-esque 'you versus the world' (hopefully!).

Pre-mission and post mission presentation are very good indeed. Pre-mission screens offer the choice of base (ground or carrier), mission-type and the aircraft one wishes to use. This can become absurd, but fun, because a Boeing 747 can be used for ground attack! After that, fuel and weapon load is selected (why can't multiple weapons be loaded on one pylon, Argonaut?). Other choices vary from graphic detail, time of day, scenery-type and so on.

Post mission reports are very detailed indeed. In fact, the reports are the most detailed I've ever seen. They include statistics and percentages on just about every variable one can think of.

Most important, though, is the graph that shows just how the two sides are doing. Divided into air and ground the line-graph moves up and down depending upon each side's mission performance.

A more detailed report of the guts of the game play, written by a young, handsome, exciting journalist (*well, a journalist anyway – Ed*) can be seen in issue 12 of *Strategy Plus*.

Delving into the flight portion of the game revealed a bit of a mixed bag.

BAe's Hawk and the B-52 Stratofortress heavy bomber were selected to test the, more 'realistic' flight model (the 'easy' flight model can also be chosen which is very generic and lacking in most aerodynamic rules – handy for beginners).

Bulky bonus

Good points, on the Hawk, included a decently simulated stall, a good representation of the gradual loss of altitude during a sustained turn without backward pressure of the stick and a good implementation of rudder. In addition, while flying the B-52, there is an excellent feel of 'bulk' and weight with this large aircraft as it is difficult to take off on a full load.

Bad points include the impossibility to perform a simple loop smoothly. Approaching the vertical the aircraft performs a rapid twist and

Designed by
Argonaut

Published by
Electronic Arts

Systems
Amiga 1Mb only, 16MHz accelerator boards supported; PC version to be released this summer

is then thrown back to 30 degrees from the vertical. The loop is successful the second time of asking, though. This happens every time. In addition it is difficult to maintain straight and level on the smaller aircraft.

With the lack of any trim controls one would assume that such adjustments would be automatically made by the program giving a smoother ride – but no.

The most laughable portion of the flight model was the successful attempt of a barrel roll and loop flying the B-52 with a full load (pulling 12g!) Besides not having the power to perform such a manoeuvre in the first place, the wings would have been ripped off.

The most damning portion of this initial test flight was the control – or lack of it. Using keyboard or digital joystick is horrendous. The merest nudge sends the aircraft plummeting headlong to the ground. The mouse is little better.

Analogue control

The only successful way to control **BOP** is by using an analogue joystick (such as those sold by Voltmace or Gravis). Argonaut should receive a good telling off about this point. To cock up the most essential feature of a flight simulation is unforgivable.

Take off is, on the whole, well designed. The hangar doors open, the engine is ignited and the aircraft taxis out. One doubt arising from this point, though, is that all **BOP** aircraft can only be taxied using rudder controls (even at varying speeds). What happened to nosewheel control, then, eh?

Once the runway is reached take off rotation is begun using 100% thrust to get the most out of the shortish runway. A satisfying spooling up of the engine is seen (and heard) before full power is reached. Various sources had reported that the frame rate was pathetic on a standard Amiga. However, while it's not exactly smooth, it's not that bad, even with full detail on.

Heads up

Again, during the mission, the program is a mixed bag. The HUD representation does a good impression of the real thing, although it's a pity that the instruments are all generic – even two cockpits (for smaller and larger aircraft) would have been nice.

Dogfighting is mostly a non-event with long range attacks dominating. Also, during combat manoeuvres the blackout and red- out sequences are rather too immediate, clicking in and out like a camera lens rather than gradually, as in real life.

The world is nicely represented. It was good to see a F-104 Starfighter tag along with my B-52 mission during a bombing run. Also, ground detail during A-10 attacks keeps the interest up.

Another major criticism is the lack of feedback the player has, as a pilot, with the outside world. That is, if the aircraft is hit the player is never aware of it. Also, if a Hellfire or Maverick is fired off at a ground installation one is never sure if it has hit because no explosion or smoke plume is ever seen. The only way of checking this out is to move away from the action to a text, battle-report screen.

The final criticism is the design of the campaign. This just hasn't been thought through. No proper explanation is ever given in the manual or in the game itself. While the battle is 'dynamic' Argonaut negates this with the lack of options in mission selection. The program tells the player what ground or air mission to fly next. If the battlefield is dynamic why can't the player decide which mission they want to fly? This idea is nothing new, ye olde **Falcon** mission disks allowed it so why can't **BOP**?

Being able to plan missions would solve some niggling campaign features. For example, flying low-level in a B1 bomber and being bombarded by SAMs when one just knows that, in real life, the Wild Weasels would have cleared a relatively SAM-free pathway to the target.

Also, the player is never told what the win-lose percentages for the campaign are, what exactly does the recce missions achieve (they seem redundant with that large AWACS map on tap)? Why can't the B1 carry cruise missiles? Why does the B-52 carry Kormorans and not Harpoons? Questions that remain unanswered.

After the mission has been completed the player can zip back to base with a very nice feature pinched (methinks) from **Wing Commander**. Using the nifty 'autopilot' feature this nippy sequence cuts from the action, presents a 'fly-by' of the aircraft and then whomp! The player is on final approach to the airfield. The landing is an anti-climax, however. It is far too easy.

Doppler effect

Birds of Prey has many good points, and many niggly points. It is surprising, considering the time spent waiting for this game, how 'rushed' it appears. The bottom line is that **Birds of Prey** is worth a look to dedicated flight sim enthusiasts. There are a few features that will strong appeal (such as the excellent doppler sound). The initially promising game play, however, will pall under the weight of frustrating design features. ❑

Bo Jackson Baseball

Diamond hard

By Joseph McCullough

Designed by
Nigel Spencer, James Maxwell, Larry Garner

Published by
Data East

Systems
IBM PC

PC graphics
EGA, VGA, MCGA

Supports
Adlib and Roland sound boards

Players
1–2

Notes
In the UK this game was released by the now defunct Mirrorsoft group as TV Sports Baseball. Because of the company's demise, however, the current UK status of the game is unknown

Anyone familiar with **TV Sports Football** and **Basketball** will feel right at home playing **Bo Jackson Baseball**. The game was programmed by the regrouped Cinemaware, now masquerading as Acme Interactive.

The installation program, menu system, and overall look and feel is identical to the **TV Sports** games. The game even retains the trademark 'anchorman' who provides pre- and post-game commentary.

Unfortunately, the game also retains some of the maddening quirks that have detracted from the otherwise stellar **TV Sports** offerings. For example, the installation program requires the player to specify a default input device. Once chosen, this is the only device active throughout the game. If a joystick was chosen (the recommended device), the arrow keys can't be selected to make menu selections. This becomes particularly frustrating on the editing screens, where precise cursor placement is a chore with the joystick.

In keeping with the Cinemaware and Data East tradition, **Bo Jackson Baseball** is heavy on the action and light on the strategy and realistic statistical modelling. The game comes with 26 teams from the actual major league cities, but the teams contain fictional players.

An edit team menu choice is included, so a purist can change all the player names and input historical statistics. The statistics, however, have no bearing on game play. Stats are tracked during league play, but they simply report how well or poor a player is performing, and do not have any effect on game outcome. Instead, players perform based on their 'skill ratings'.

For pitchers, the skill ratings include curve, control, stamina, and hitting ability. All other players are rated on their bunting ability, running speed, throwing strength, and defensive ability. The higher the skill rating (on a scale of one to ten), the better the player. All the skill ratings can be modified, and unlike other **TV Sports** games, there is nothing that limits the player from assigning a maximum rating to every member of his team in every skill category.

Handy settings

In addition to player editing, the edit team function also includes choices for setting the line-up and pitching rotation. Separate line-ups can be set for playing against left-handed pitchers and right-handed pitchers. Once set, these default choices can be changed before each game.

As for actual game play, **Bo Jackson Baseball** offers either exhibition or league games. League games are part of an entire 162-game season, just like in the majors. Data East gets marks for mirroring the big league schedules, but the lack of a schedule-making utility is a serious oversight.

The game does not require the player to actually take part in all 162 contests, as it does have a quick play mode. It would be nice, however, to be able to create less gruelling schedules. As it stands, the player either has to endure 162 games, or rely on the computer to share some of the responsibility for his season by simulating game outcomes.

Once play begins, **Bo Jackson Baseball** exhibits all the traits of an action-packed simulation. The graphics are rendered in crisp VGA, the animation is smooth, and sound effects are abundant. Total player control is the desired effect here, and the excellent visual presentation makes it easy to get a feel for the action. The player controls every on-screen action: pitching, hitting, running and throwing. The batter can even be positioned in the batter's box for the best shot at hitting the ball.

Reflex actions

All of this action requires the reflexes of a seasoned Nintendo junkie as most of the game controls are difficult to master. The batter's box is just the right size, and it is easy to get a feel for the strike zone. Hitting the ball is another matter, though. Not only must the player swing at the correct time, he also must position the batter as the pitch is coming across the plate.

Fielding is tough, too, but this is more the fault of the game's design than a reflection on the player's reflexes. Should the ball get past the infield, the game often does not scroll the display to the outfield quickly enough to allow the fielders a chance to make the play. A radar screen is located in the bottom right corner of the display to aid the defence, but one's first reaction is to look to the field, not to the radar box.

With all the emphasis on action, there is little room for game management. Players can be substituted (on offence and defence); the defence can be shifted; pitchers can be changed, and that's it. Relief pitchers don't even have to be warmed up before entering the game. Furthermore, there is no way to consult with the pitcher to calm him down should his performance quickly deteriorate. Also missing is a way to review the running abilities of on base opponents.

Despite the flaws, if action is what you seek, **Bo Jackson** delivers. ❑

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BY GEORGE!

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Road to the Final Four

Through the hoop

By Joseph McCullough

In last month's *Sports Locker*, I previewed **Road to the Final Four** (**RTFF**) with great enthusiasm. The NCAA men's basketball tournament is one of the most exciting sports events of the year, and **RTFF** promised to simulate last year's tournament with unparalleled accuracy. What should have been a great game, however, turned out to be another disappointment.

RTFF was designed in part by Mirage Graphics, the same team responsible for **Earl Weaver Baseball II**. If you like how Mirage handled the graphics, animation, sound and user interface in that game, you'll like **RTFF**. The problem is, I haven't encountered many people who rave about **Earl Weaver II**.

Designed by
Kenneth Dullea III, Chris Mate, Mark Whittlesey

Published by
Bethesda Softworks

Systems
IBM PC

PC graphics
EGA, VGA, MCGA

Supports
Adlib and Sound Blaster sound boards

Players
1–2

The graphics are the heart of the problem. Mirage still insists on using MCGA instead of VGA when programming its games. MCGA uses a larger pixel size than VGA, so any games drawn in this standard are doomed to look boxy and unprofessional.

Animation is another serious shortcoming of **RTFF**, and the game's deficiencies are showcased when the 'autocam' feature is enabled. Autocam uses different camera angles to focus on the action, much like a TV broadcast. Any positive effects this may have on the game are overshadowed by poor implementation.

When autocam is active, animation slows to a crawl. It's not like a slow-motion effect, though. It's worse. The players don't just slow down; individual animation frames stutter across the screen like a slide show.

This would not be the case, of course, on a 386/33 or a 486 computer, but the package recommends a 286 as the minimum hardware required to enjoy the game. If my 386SX/20 has trouble, I'd hate to see the game run on a slower machine. Mercifully, autocam can be disabled. In fact, this is the default setting.

Although **RTFF**'s graphics and animation need some serious work, the game's sound is first class. Sound Blaster owners will be happy that all referee calls are made through the sound card, not the PC speaker. Sound effects are also ported through the sound card, and are some of the best I've ever heard in any sports simulation. It's nice to know that someone was finally able to capture the sound of a basketball bouncing on a hardwood floor without it sounding like a pogo stick.

Underneath the graphics and animation lies a wealth of features that, if executed properly, could make **RTFF** a fantastic game despite the graphics shortcomings.

Flexible friend

One of **RTFF**'s greatest strengths is its flexibility. The player is not restricted to simply plodding through the NCAA tournament as designed by last year's selection committee. The game's NCAA menu allows the player to seed teams differently, or select a single game between any two of the original 64 teams. Also included is a player editor, which allows changes in every imaginable statistical category.

Furthermore, three modes of play are supported: fast simulation, action play and coach-only. Fast simulation is just that. The computer quickly plays all scheduled games and updates the scores and stats.

Action mode, though, contains some of the most frustrating chores imagined in a computer game. Players are controlled in this mode with 18 different action commands – nine on offence, nine on defence. Each action command is assigned a key on the keyboard/keypad, or a position on the joystick.

With such a plethora of commands to memorize, mastering this mode of play would take hours of practice. Each action command can be assigned to a different key or joystick position, but what would be the use? There would still be 18 commands to memorize. The game's designers should be commended for adding unprecedented detail to an action mode, but chastised for making it virtually unplayable.

Coach trip

Coach-only mode is **RTFF**'s salvation. Before the game the player can set his line-up and design his offence from a play book of 13 plays. During the game the coach can call the play, substitute players, change the active play list, and call a time out. Fatigue is a factor, so substitution patterns can effect game outcomes.

For all its assets, however, coach-only mode has one fatal liability: there is no way to make defensive assignments. Many times in basketball the coach will assign a double team to the other team's star player, or have the point guard cover the off guard. As it stands, the only way to change defensive assignments is to play a player out of position. If you want the small forward to defend the off guard, you have to play him at the off guard position.

Once play has begun, the overall game dynamics mirror basketball quite well. When plays are called they are executed with precision.

RTFF has its high points, especially in coach-only mode, but Bethesda has a long road ahead of it before the company can be crowned basketball champions. ❑

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Blizzard of Oz

I must object to the attitude of the editor both in editorial comment and answers to readers' letters. The righteousness and anger expressed are inexcusable coming from a journalist who is supposedly experienced and mature enough to have obtained such a senior position (yes, I quite expect to get ridiculed for my criticism).

You also seemed obsessed with the idea that we need an American magazine produced by the British. This makes you neither a Lotus 7 or a Cadillac, more a heavy body on a light chassis. The fact is there are better computer magazines from England (with cover disks) and America.

On the plus side, I do like your coverage of flight simulation programs, and the introduction of Vapour Trail.

As a player who prefers a human opponent to any artificial intelligence system, I would like to see more articles on multi-player modem gaming. How about a comparison of how modem games play of differently configured systems? I bought **Knights of the Sky** in preference to **Red Baron** (despite the reviews) for the modem support and know others who did the same.

I would like to end by recommending **Command HQ** to anyone interested in trying modem play. Hoping my comments and criticism don't fall on deaf ears.

Graham Mason
Kensington 3031
Australia

Say what? Just because I had to claw my way to the top past all the power mad yuppies on the floor below, there's no need to get personal. The editorial philosophy is to create a magazine that transcends the confines of both national and planetary identity.

Getting on

I'm not sure why I am subscribing to your magazine after the rude way you treated reader A Conlan in the Rebound section, issue 12.

Mr Conlan has a perfect right to 'go on' about anything he chooses. Have you forgotten that you are the 'seller' and he is the 'buyer' in this arrangement?

But enough of that. I am primarily a flight simulator enthusiast and I guess I subscribe to magazines such as yours because I live in a rural area and I, like others like me, depend on the likes of your magazine for all our gaming information, tips, reviews, and so forth.

We all depend on you *very much*, so please keep all the latest, accurate and honest information coming.

Donald Schaaf
McCook
Nebraska 69001 USA

Our tests have proved that Rebound is the most popular part of the magazine. There are two possible explanations for this.

1) Readers like it.

2) Our readership is comprised of lots of ex-public schoolboys who like to have their bottom spanked.

But you're correct. Readers have a perfect right to go on about anything they choose. And on, and on, and on. For example...

Compliments of the season over there, sir. How are you and your business in particular? I hope everything is going systematically. If so, we thank the almighty God.

I'm fourteen years old and one of the best players in our school, and I like to put in more effort. I am not capable of buying games wear [sic] of my own so I would like you to send me some. I would like you to send me a small size. I shall be looking for your help. I would like to stop here, sir. Quickly reply. Amen.

Ismailia Amodu
Alamuwa Grammar School
PO Box 21, Ado-Odo
Ogun State, Nigeria

Amen, and a free card game to you young sir. May all your delightful missives reap a rich reward.

Senor service

The walk-through of **Martian Dreams** by Randy Snow has helped me a lot, but then I got to the point in the game that has made me write to you. I have to turn on the power on the ruby crystal's towers to gain access to a hidden lab under the ice.

The controls of the system are in a room next to the tower at 58N, 23W. Using these you have to enter the 'align coordinates'. Randy Snow said: 'Dr Spector entered the military time for the coordinates.' I might be dumb, thick, or maybe Spanish, but I don't know what he means.

There is no help from the documentation that comes with the game. It seems quite odd that you can get stuck on such a trivial thing.

Pedro Marroquin
28023-Madrid, Spain

Buenos dias, O lovely, lovely buyer whom I'm humbled to be able to serve. Here is the advice you are looking for: after checking your watch and converting to a 24hr clock, enter the military time into the alignment computer. This should see you on your way.

Sound fix

I'm writing in connection with the letter in the January 1992 edition of Strategy Plus where Paul Heaton was asking about the CONFIG=ATP setting on Sublogic's **ATP**.

You mentioned a supposed sound fix that didn't work too well. However, if you look in the GAME PUBLISHERS forum on Compuserve under Sublogic you'll find the new delta test release of the Adlib driver for **ATP**. This is a considerable improvement over the older beta test release version.

If he or anyone else who wants this driver don't have access to Compuserve then If they send me a disk plus an sae I'll copy it for them.

Mateen Greenway
12 Hatch Place
Kingston-upon-Thames
Surrey, KT2 5NB UK

Programmed to thrill

First of all I'd like to congratulate you on such a superb magazine. It's good to see you giving the strategy/role-playing genre the credit it deserves, but which most magazines unfortunately ignore.

Anyway, now to the point of this letter. I think that as well as just dealing with computer games, you should run regular articles concerning the actual programmers themselves. These could include the like Dr Peter Turcan and Tony Crowther.

I'm sure that many of your readers would like to learn more about the people who create the games we enjoy playing so much. How about it?

Stuart Hardy
Sheffield
S31 8LZ UK

Check out the interview with Fritz Bronner in this issue. Watch out for future centrefolds on the new breed of programmer pin-ups boys (and girls).

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Letters may be cut to shreds for reasons of space and editorial dementia

Buggy ride

In the light of the recent crash in France is there any truth in the rumour that Thalian Software has decided to delay the release of **A320 Airbus** until enough bugs can be put into the program, thus making it fly like the real thing?

David Aspinall
Bradford, UK

Bad Taste Letter of the Month award.

Sniff

I'm writing just to make you the biggest compliments for your mag. Please don't listen to people saying 'do this', 'do that'. I think if you follow your nose as well as you have until now you'll go much further.

'M M'
Barga, Italy

And I thought I'd lost my sense of smell long ago.

Christian relief

I'm writing in response to in a letter in issue 13 from Mr Denis Lovell. Maybe because I'm an agnostic I have trouble understanding the devout Christian point of view, but it seems to me the man has overreacted.

Many people who are responsible adults (unlike Mr Lovell) can respect and enjoy games like **Sex Olympics**, **Spellcasting 101**, and **Leisure Suit Larry**. People like Mr Lovell always worry me because I think it can only lead to censorship.

I hope you will ignore these reactionaries and continue to review games such as these. Other than that I would like to compliment you on a well written magazine.

Tim Niland
Merrisville
NY13408 USA

Steamed up

Could I make it clear to you and your readers that the problems which face the Atari ST are mostly caused by the lack of support offered rather than any deficiency of the machine itself.

Surely you clever people at *Strategy Plus* understand that any software produced on the Amiga could easily be made to run on an ST? On rare occasions there may be a few less colours or sound effects, but as you should know game play is 90% of any game. Atari ST owners make up 20.9% of your UK readership. Please do not neglect them or insult them (the reply to I Hlum was bound to upset ST owners). Your prejudices often show through.

Maybe if magazines were more truthful about the ability of the ST to manage any of the software demands of Amiga games, more people would buy them and more software houses support them. Only childish people jump on the 'my machine is better then yours bandwagon'.

I T Leach
Portsmouth PO4 8JH

Never has it been stated in this magazine that the Atari ST is 'deficient' in some way. The comment to which you refer was based on the lack of software being developed on or for the ST, a problem which you yourself acknowledge in your letter. Because of this it would have been exceedingly dishonest to recommend the purchase of an Atari computer to the reader.

Price war

Concerning the heated discussion between the PC and Amiga owners, I feel I should put the record straight once and for all.

I myself am an Amiga owner, but I am not here to slag off the PC. On the contrary I accept that the average PC is superior to the average Amiga. But one must not forget price – a decent PC package with VGA and a sound card costs £1700 plus. I'm sure the reasonable price of the Amiga is responsible for introducing many people to the world of advanced computer entertainment.

I accept that, at present, the A500 is the only Amiga with games designed for it, which is why the PC is overtaking the Amiga in the realm of strategy and adventure games. But how much PC do you get for under £300? Answer: zero. If I could afford it I would have a 486 PC and an Amiga 3000, but we can't have everything can we?

James Wilkinson
High Wycombe
HP12 4BB, UK

The points you make are perfectly sound, but your prices are way out of line. It is now possible to buy a 286/16 PC, without monitor or hard disk, for £299. Even after tax this is still cheaper than an Amiga (£369). Add £250–300 for a hard disk and a VGA monitor, plus £70 for an Adlib sound board. A 386SX can now be picked up for around £800 including a VGA monitor, a hard disk and a sound card.

New game plan

Thanks for the review of my **American Football Coach** in issue 16. May I, through this column, inform your readers that I have taken your reviewer's comments on board and the following amendments have now been made:

1) The 'glitch' which he discovered has now been eradicated.

2) Durham has now been substituted for Columbus.

3) A facility to shift the defensive line left or right against a running play has now been added.

In the time-honoured tradition, version 2.0 is already under way.

Haydn Potter
Composer Software
Monmouth
NP5 4QN, UK

Modem gaming

Strategy Plus is keen to encourage modem gaming and to this end we will be starting a 'opponents wanted' column in the next issue.

Just drop us a line stating the area and country in which you live, your telephone number, whether or not you are prepared to play long distance, and the games you would like to play, together with the type of machine you play on. UK and European readers should write to: *Strategy Plus*, Lamerton House, 27 High Street, Ealing, London W5 5DF, UK. US readers should write to: *Strategy Plus*, PO Box 21, Hancock, VT 05748.

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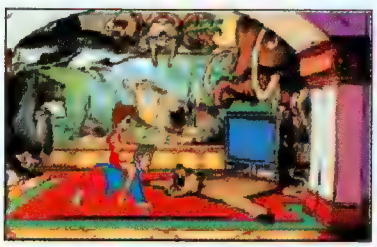

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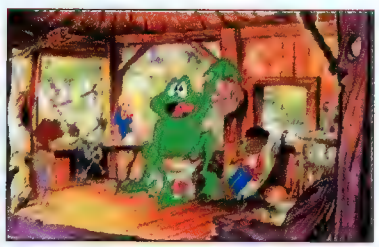

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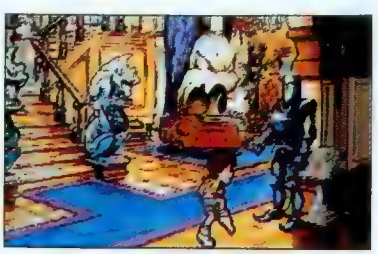

...When it comes to Willy, "Nothing is weirder than he but thee". Or something.

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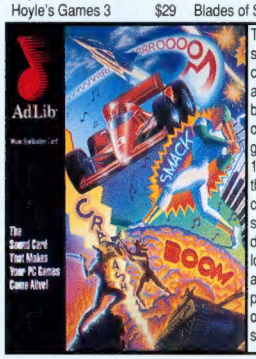
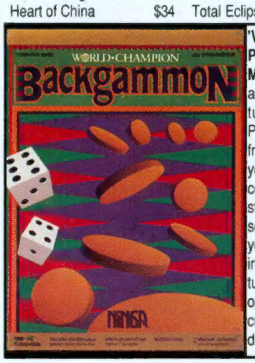
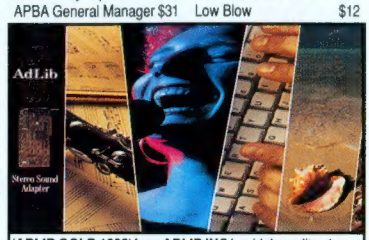


The **'ADLIB'** music synthesizer card by **ADLIB INC** adds sound capability to hundreds of existing PC games. Using its 11 different FM synthesized voices, it can reproduce any sound. The standard audio jack allows you to plug in any pair of headphones, boombox, or bookshelf speaker. **$69**



'WORLD CHAMPION BACKGAMMON' includes all aspects of this centuries-old game. Play against a friend or challenge yourself against the computer. Use the standard board or set up the table with your favorite opening position. Features 3 play levels, optional doubling cube, use your own dice. **$24**

'WORLD CHAMPION CRIBBAGE' contains all aspects of this classic card game. You cut for first crib, shuffle, deal, discard, cut for starter, play your cards and peg your points as you attempt to skunk your opponent. Includes 2 difficulty levels, variable game speed, and a win-loss record. **$24**



'ADLIB GOLD 1000' from **ADLIB INC** is a high quality **stereo** sound card. It complies with Multimedia PC sound adapter standards. Features: 16 bit stereo DAC providing 96db of dynamic range, programmable audio mixer, 20 stereo channels, MIDI input and output, sampling rates of up to 44.1 KHz, stereo input jack, and game port. **$199**

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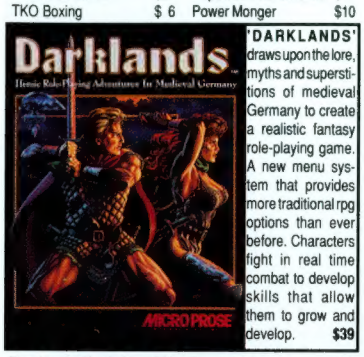
Dragons of Flame	$10
Drakkhen	$10
Elvira 1 or 2	$10
Eye of Beholder 1	$10
Eye of Beholder 2	$12
Fountain of Dreams	$10
Free DC	$10
Gateway Savage Frntr	$10
Hard Nova	$10
Harpoon Battlebook	$19
Heart of China	$10
Hero's Quest 1 - 3 Ea	$10
Immortal	$10



'DARKLANDS' draws upon the lore, myths and superstitions of medieval Germany to create a realistic fantasy role-playing game. A new menu system that provides more traditional rpg options than ever before. Characters fight in real time combat to develop skills that allow them to grow and develop. **$39**

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Might & Magic 3	$16
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Populous 1&2 Offici Str	$16
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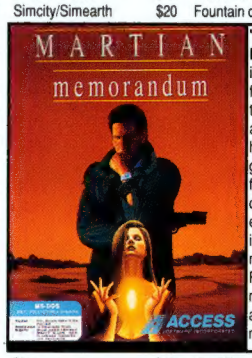

'MARTIAN MEMORANDUM' is an exhilarating, fast paced interactive mystery. You are Tex Murphy, a hard boiled gumshoe , who faces murder, deception, and prophecy while searching for the martian memorandum. Features fully animated talking characters and on demand help. **$37**

Simearth	$19
Space Quest 1 - 4 Ea	$10
Starflight 1 or 2	$10
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Ultima 4 - 7 Ea	$10
Wizardry 6 Cosmic Frg	$12
Wizardry 7 Crusade	$12
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Zak McKracken	$10

The **'THUNDER BOARD'** is a sound board that is 100% compatible with Soundblaster and Adlib. It reproduces digitized sounds using an 8 bit DAC. Features include dynamic filtering, 11 Voice FM music synthesizer, sampling rate up to 22 KHz, microphone input, joystick port, and a 2 watt power amplifier. **$84**

Indy Jones Lst Crsade	$10
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Loom	$10
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Curse of Azure Bonds	$32
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Death Knights of Krynn	$32
Dragon Strike	$12
Dragons of Flame	$12
Eye of the Beholder	$32
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Heroes of the Lance	$12
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Shadow Sorcerer	$32
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Flames of Freedom	$28
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Hard Nova	$17
Hero's Quest 1	$21
Hero's Quest 2 or 3	$34
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Lord of the Rings 2	$37
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Magic Candle 2	$37
Matrix Cubed	$32
Mechwarrior	$34
Megatraveller 1	$16
Megatraveller 2	$19
Megatraveller 3	$39
Midwinter 1	$12
Midwinter 2	$28
Might & Magic 1	$12
Might & Magic 2	$12
Might & Magic 1, 2&HB	$33
Might & Magic 3	$37
Might & Magic 4	$42
Mines of Titan	$12
Murder	$29
Paladin	$28
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Pirates	$ 9
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IBM ROLE PLAYING

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Ultima Savage Empire	$34
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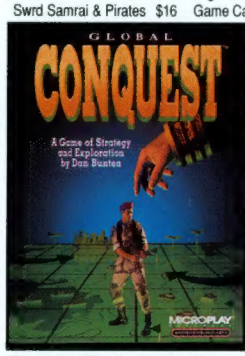

'GLOBAL CONQUEST' is the first strategy game that allows up to 4 players to compete while exploring a **random** world via modem, link, or LAN. You face up to four cutthroat computer adversaries, each with a distinct personality. Features 3 world view sizes and control of land, sea & air forces. **$39**

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IBM SIMULATION

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Megafortress Mission 1	$27
Megafortress Mission 2	$27
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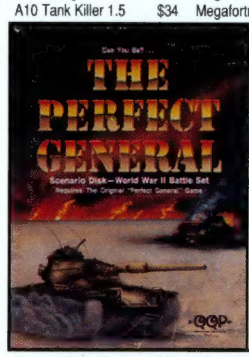
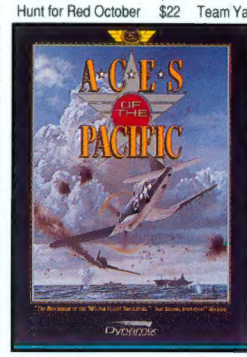


'WORLD WAR II BATTLE SET' for the Perfect Generalincludes the folowing scenarios: Pegasus Bridge, Sicily, Guadalcanal, Kasserine Pass, Gafsa, Anzio, Utah Beach, Omaha Beach, Okinawa, Saipan, Gazala-Bir Hacheim, Iwo Jima, Arnheim, Oahu, and Kharkov. **$23**



'ACES OF THE PACIFIC' brings all the action of the War in the Pacific to your PC. Fly the A6M Zero, F4U Corsair, F6F Hellcat, and many more. Includes single mission or campaign play for either side, legendary aces to fight, a powerful mission recorder, and an extensive 240 page manual. **$42**

IBM SIMULATION

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Test Drive 3	$32
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Their Finest Hour	$37
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Thunderstrike	$39
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Tracon 2	$29
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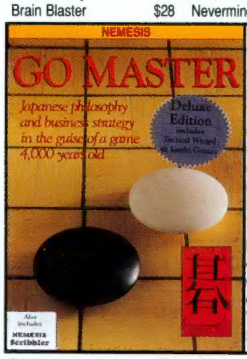
Yeager's AFT 2.0	$19


NEMESIS
GO MASTER
Japanese philosophy and business strategy in the guise of a game 4,000 years old
Deluxe Edition
Scribbler

'NEMESIS GO VER 5 DELUXE' is the ultimate computer GO program. With the simplicity of checkers and the complexity of chess, GO is a serious strategy game. Includes: GO MASTER-a basic GO player and tutor, Joseki Genius adds complex corner openings, Tactical Wizard and the Scribbler. **$109**

'THRUSTMASTER' flightcontrol system is the only joystick designed to function like those found on modern fighting aircraft. This 5 button joystick runs from a standard game card interface and is fully compatible with older games. While newer titles such as Falcon 3 will take full advantage of its capabilities. **$69**

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